

*The Gift*  
Oak Grove Presbyterian Church  
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May 27, 2018, Acts 2:36-38

*“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”*

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*

*Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The day of Pentecost in the bible is one of the most oft discussed and dissected passages in all of Christianity, but in that denomination it holds a special kind of purpose. The gifts of the spirit play an active role in their theology, liturgy, and daily lives and this moment is to them the historical moment when God’s spirit first rushes into our lives as humans.

Prior to this God’s spirit was something separate, something rare. Something felt on occasion when the spirit of God was present of its own accord. Now though we have this gift, this thing that scripture says we can call on and use!

Today we are going to talk about the gift. Now for many of us this is something we have never questioned, the Gift of the Holy Spirit. God loves me. That much I know. It says it plenty of times throughout the gospels that I am loved and God died for me and that I am forgiven by Jesus.

That forgiveness is one of the most predominant themes of the whole bible. Whether we're sacrificing animals in the Old Testament or honoring Jesus in the new, all were a means to get forgiveness from God for the things that we do wrong every day.

However, this scripture is talking about something else. It says repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Check that for a moment. Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.

Then separately, this passage says, And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit here is meant clearly and throughout the New testament to be seen as something different than the forgiveness and salvation afforded to us through Jesus.

It means that everything that follows from this point on in the book of Acts is viewed in the context of the gift of the spirit.

What follows are Acts with a capital A. Miracles. People are healed of diseases, instantly and dramatically. Visions are given that actually come true. The apostles at one point walk out of a sealed and guarded prison. They walk through walls.

These miracles were the gift. We aren't just forgiven we are empowered. Our problematic apostle Paul later on goes into even more detail in *1 Corinthians 12*:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** *There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.*

**7** *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,*

*9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.[b] 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*

Messages of knowledge and wisdom, healing, miracles. Just miracles in general whatever that means. Prophecy. The ability to sense and discern spirits, to speak in other languages, to interpret languages. All of that is included. Incredible things.

Now I'm going to pause for a second here. Many preachers stop at this section and start going into detail about each of those things there and pulling out tests so you can find your gift, but the important part of that passage is not the specifics. No one of these gifts, or even all of these gifts are all that important in the grand scheme of faith. Paul actually specifically said this later on in this book and went on to admonish people who would do that very thing.

Now to each one the manifestation of the spirit is given **for the Common Good.**

That there. That is the gift of the spirit. It is given so that we may each participate powerfully in the Common Good, the common ministry of the church.

Forgiveness of sins is for you. The gift of the spirit, that is for everyone else.

For all of my years in Pentecostalism, for the many miraculous things I believe I've seen, and if you ever want to talk about miracles you're welcome to come chat with me about that whenever you like, I've seen some wild stuff, the most powerful representation of the spirit of god to me happened a few months ago in this very building.

Some of you may remember a day a few months ago when we took extra security precautions due to a threatening encounter one of the nonprofits that operates in our building had with a stranger. There was fear that someone might come and commit some kind of terrible act here. We took appropriate action. Police were called, a guard was hired for the building for the following Sunday. Policies were addressed and new training happened for our staff and many of our volunteers.

That first Sunday, though I was scheduled to speak. I actually think I talked about Pentecost on that day too. When I speak I get here early. It helps me to get myself centered and to review my topic for the day. So I'm sitting here early in the office alone and I look up to see Bill Chadwick arrive not long after me. I'd been here for a few months at least, but the strange thing was this was the very first time I'd ever seen Bill in anything resembling a formal clergy outfit. He had on his collar and other formal wear and looked the spitting image of a Presbyterian minister.

So I asked him, Bill why are you all dressed up today? I've never seen you like this.

And he says "well I don't usually do this. Robes used to be something that made priests and pastors look more like the common man, not less and I try not to wear the formal stuff now, but today you're speaking. There was a threat this week and if someone wants to come in and do something terrible, I want there to be no mistake about who the minister is. I want them to know where to aim."

This is a man I'd known for less than 6 months looking at me and saying, Nathan today I would die for you. You are protected. My presence is meant to cover and safeguard you.

That is the gift of the spirit. It is meant to do something. Bill's actions empowered me and made me more capable of speaking. It's that simple. It's that powerful.