

Our subject in this chapter has been the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. As we reflect on what we have found to be the Scriptural teaching on these matters, we conclude that we need both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. To say that we need the fruit of the Spirit rather than the gifts of the Spirit, as is sometimes done, would be to detract from the value of the Spirit's gifts. We need both.

In desiring and seeking the gifts of the Spirit, however, there are certain cautions that must be observed. First, we have found no evidence in the New Testament that the church today is instructed to seek the "miraculous" gifts of the Spirit like speaking with tongues or gifts of healing. We have also found no evidence that speaking in tongues is either a proof of one's having received a post-conversion "Spirit-baptism" or a special means whereby one is enabled to live on a higher spiritual level than those who do not have this gift. There is no Scriptural basis, therefore, for the claim that believers today must still seek these miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

Further, not every believer may seek all the gifts of the Spirit which are still distributed to God's people, since these gifts are distributed variously, and since God has never promised that every believer would have all of these gifts. This means, among other things, that we must not envy the gifts of a fellow-Christian, or think ourselves inferior to someone who has more gifts than we, but that we must rather do the very best we can to serve the Lord with the gifts He has given us.

Most important of all, we should never seek the gifts of the Spirit apart from the fruit of the Spirit. For Paul makes it very clear that to exercise spiritual gifts in an unloving way is to go contrary to the purpose for which these gifts were given (I Cor. 13:1-3). Teaching is a most valuable gift, but those whose teaching has its roots in conceit and causes dissension and slander are condemned in no uncertain terms (I Tim. 6:3-5). Ruling is a gift for which the possessor should be very thankful, but a Diotrephes who abuses his ruling office for his own selfish purposes is sharply rebuked by the Apostle John (III John 9-10). The warning uttered by these New Testament writers still holds for us: anyone who is more concerned to reveal the gifts of the Spirit than to show the fruit of the Spirit, or who revels in the possession of certain spiritual gifts apart from the exercise of the fruit of the Spirit, is out of harmony with the will of God.