

# DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

June 2-6, 2008



*"As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."<sup>1</sup>*

Traditionally, Reformed churches have taught that there are three 'marks' or qualities essential to a true church of Jesus Christ:

**1. The Word is truly Taught**

While no fellowship or denomination is perfect in its doctrine or practices, we are called to be faithful to the word of God in what we teach, believe and do<sup>2</sup>.

**2. The Sacraments are rightly Administered**

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be observed faithfully and in accordance with the Scripture. They should be cultivated carefully as a powerful channel of grace.

**3. Discipline is faithfully Exercised**

As a shepherd guides with rod and staff, so the church is to exercise loving oversight and appropriate guidance.<sup>3</sup> Without such loving correction there will be a loss of faith, piety and holiness in the fellowship.

While these 'marks' of the church are significant, they should not supplant the one specific 'mark' that Jesus himself specified: Christians corporately are to be renowned for their love for one another. This, probably more than anything else, gave power to the message of the gospel in the early days of the Church. The mark of love could have the same impact in the third millennium!

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<sup>1</sup> John 13:34-35 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:21-29

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew 18:18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 14:33, 40

June 3, 2008

## The Spirit Upon

*"I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone."<sup>1</sup>*

Broadly speaking, the role of the Spirit is to create life: to build, change, transform. In the Old Testament we see this at Creation and in his 'coming upon' specific individuals for empowered service.

Outpouring of the Spirit upon individuals or groups could be lifelong or last for a limited time. It was sometimes accompanied by a temporary manifestation of 'prophecy'<sup>2</sup> to give evidence of the presence of the Spirit and to lend authority to those persons to exercise their roles or tasks. Persons anointed in this way included:

- Elders of Israel
- Judges and Kings
- Prophets
- Weavers and artisans who worked upon the Tabernacle and its furnishings

When the Spirit was poured out upon a person, they were considered to be 'filled' with the Spirit. As a person 'filled' with wine is said to be 'under the influence' of alcohol, so a person 'filled' with the Spirit is under his influence and direction<sup>3</sup>. They are empowered and guided to act in ways that will promote God's purposes, build his Kingdom and bless his people.

Before Christ, such filling was limited to a few. The new covenant changed this dramatically.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 11:16b-17 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Numbers 11:26. Probably some form of ecstatic speech is meant

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 5:18

June 4, 2008

## Pentecost

*"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."<sup>1</sup>*

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, a new dispensation of the Spirit began. No longer would the filling of the Spirit for anointed service be limited to a few. From Pentecost onward, he was available to be poured out on all those who acknowledge Christ as Lord.

Note that this outpouring of the Spirit is distinct from the indwelling of the Spirit which occurs at conversion. Jesus' death and resurrection made the new birth available to his followers on Easter and that evening they received the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> But they were required to wait until Pentecost, for the outpouring of the Spirit, before beginning to do the work of proclaiming the gospel. It needed to be plain to all that the Kingdom is built by God's direction and power, not merely by human planning or effort.

While the 'filling' of the Spirit is available to all Christians, not all walk in it. The filling of the Spirit may wane if the Spirit is 'quenched' through disobedience, particularly a refusal to serve. New 'fillings' of the Spirit may be received by a refreshed commitment to God's will. God may also pour out his Spirit as he leads into new areas of service to build up the body of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:17-18 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> John 20:22

June 5, 2008

## 'Gifts' of the Spirit

*"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.'"<sup>1</sup>*

In English, the word 'gift' can have at least two meanings. The more common usage is something that is graciously or freely given without cost or recompense to the recipient. When we speak of salvation by grace, we are talking about this kind of 'gift': that being made right with God is something offered to us freely - it is not something we earn.

But in English, 'gift' can also mean 'special ability'. When we speak of someone who is 'gifted' in music or the arts, we are referring to some special talent or ability that they possess.

The widespread view of the '*charismata*' or 'gifts' of the Spirit is that they are special abilities or powers bestowed by God. Every believer has at least one. - They are frequently uncovered by various methods including spiritual gifts tests, trial and error, feedback from others, etc. However it is done, the process is one of discovery and activation. We are to seek to discover our gifts and then use them in service.

But the word '*charismata*' does not of itself mean 'special abilities' or powers. It may be understood to as 'grace-things' or 'things-freely-given' by the grace of God. In context, the 'gifts' referred to are all ministries or opportunities to serve. They all require the '*dunamis*' or power of the Spirit to make them fruitful and some also require special or even miraculous ability as a prerequisite. But they are not special abilities that we can use for our own personal benefit or for the sake of personal experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:7-8 (TNIV)

June 6, 2008

**“Ministries of Grace”**

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”<sup>1</sup>*

It has been suggested that the translation of ‘*charismata*’ as ‘spiritual gifts’ (meaning ‘special abilities’) is so common that a new translation would be preferable.<sup>2</sup> Possible alternatives include ‘ministries of grace’, ‘works of grace’ and ‘gifts of ministry’. As we look at the various ‘*charismata*’ specifically named in the Bible, we will use the term ‘ministries of grace’ not only because it better describes ALL of them, but because it challenges some of the dangers inherent in the conventional view of the ‘*charismata*’ as ‘special-abilities’.

The conventional view of *charismata* allows many people to see them as special abilities which are given primarily so that we may have individual spiritual experiences. *Charismata* are not given so that we may experience God and they are not something we may use or withhold at our choosing. They are callings or roles of service given to glorify God as we use them to edify fellow believers and build the Kingdom.

This means that ministries of grace must be employed in the context of a community of faith. We must be accountable to others in how we use them. We need one another to help us avoid tunnel-vision in our exercise of our ministries and to prevent our areas of strength from being areas of weakness. As all the *charismata* are connected and utilized together in one body, Christ can work in and through us to glorious effect.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Ken Berding, [What are Spiritual Gifts](#)