



People God Wants for Spiritual Manifestations

By: Hardy W. Steinberg

At a time when Israel had drifted so far from God that the nation was at the very brink of judgment, God said, “And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

God could have sent angels to carry out the needed ministry, but His method then as now is through people rather than angelic beings. While angels have been instrumental in bringing needy persons and ministering persons together as in the case of Cornelius and Peter, the ministry itself has been through redeemed man.

When it comes to the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is also looking for people through whom He can manifest himself. A natural question is, “What kind of a person is He looking for?” In Scripture passages dealing with the gifts of the Spirit a profile can be found of the kind of person He wants to use.

One Who Desires Spiritual Gifts

Paul wrote, “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 14:1). And again, “Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy” (1 Corinthians 14:39).

“Covet” and “desire” which translate the same Greek word (*zeloute*) are equally strong terms and indicate how intensely we should want to be used of the Spirit. We have an illustration of this in the conversation between Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah said, “Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee,” Elisha’s reply was, “I pray thee let a double portion of thy Spirit be upon me” (see 2 Kings 2:9–15). The Holy Spirit is looking for people who long to be used of Him in any way He chooses.

Sometimes people express a fear that if they come into a certain kind of spiritual atmosphere they might become unwilling instruments of spiritual manifestations. They need not fear. The Holy Spirit will not force himself on anyone. He is looking for people who earnestly desire His manifestations in and through their lives.

Believers are in harmony with Scripture when they long to be the agents the Holy Spirit can use. Paul wrote that there are even times when we should pray to be the Spirit’s instrument: “Wherefore let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he might interpret” (1 Corinthians 14:13).

One Who Recognizes The Spirit’s Sovereignty

Paul wrote: “But all these [gifts mentioned in verses 8–10] worketh that one and selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Corinthians 12:11).

The Holy Spirit determines how and through whom He will manifest himself. We do not choose which manifestation will occur. He determines this as He will. This truth corrects the notion which some teach that we need to learn how to use the Holy Spirit. We do not use Him. He in His sovereignty uses us if we yield to Him.

One Who Has Faith To Yield To Him

To the Roman believers Paul wrote: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith” (Romans 12:6).

The world about us believes very little in the divine supernatural, and this skepticism can even creep into the church. The tendency to lack faith is compounded by the fact that in manifestations of the Spirit there is cooperation between the human and the divine. Believers may not question God’s part, but they question the human factor. Fear and doubt then replace faith.

Various questions can arise. “What if I mistake an impression for prophetic utterance and even though I have the best of intentions say something which is inappropriate or unscriptural?” Or, “What if I give an interpretation of tongues and someone who is present knows the foreign language spoken and recognizes the interpretation is not accurate?” Or, “What if I speak the first four or five words which are impressed on my mind, and nothing else follows?”

Faith is a quality necessary in the life of the person the Holy Spirit uses. He must not only believe that the Spirit manifests himself, but also that He can and may want to use him. Like Moses some believers do not doubt that God can perform miracles, but they doubt that God can do it through them (see Exodus 4:1,10).

One Who Possesses The Fruit Of The Spirit

First Corinthians 13 is a great love chapter sandwiched between the two chapters of teaching concerning spiritual gifts, and it is an integral part of the teaching. Verses 1,2 indicate that without love the person who speaks in tongues of men or of angels is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And the manifestation of other gifts without love primarily emphasizes the barrenness of that life. The Holy Spirit is concerned about life as well as ministry and is looking for people whose lives manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

First Corinthians 13:4–7 helps believers know what a person is like who manifests the fruit of the Spirit. The NIV renders this passage as follows: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

The fact that a person is used of the Spirit does not mean he is perfect. No one can claim to be sinlessly perfect (1 John 1:8). But the Holy Spirit delights to use people who desire the fruit as much as the gifts of the Spirit. The more godly the life, the more meaningful the manifestation. Conversely, those whose lives are not what they should be bring a reproach on the cause of Christ as in the case of the Corinthian believers.

One Who Is Humble

One of the dangers a person must guard against if he has been used by the Spirit is pride. It is important to remember the manifestation is not an indication of elite status, but a gift of grace.

Moses was greatly used of God and a meek man (Numbers 12:3), yet he lost his temper and implied he could perform a miracle and bring water out of a rock. He said, “Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” (Numbers 20:10).

Because of the human factor, a believer can miss the intent of the Holy Spirit and proceed in some kind of manifestation in the flesh. For this reason Paul wrote: “Let the others judge” (1 Corinthians 14:29). The person the Spirit wants to use is humble enough to recognize that his ministry will be evaluated. He will not be filled with resentment if others do not accept what he felt was a manifestation of the Spirit. He will recognize that because he is human he can, however well-intentioned, move in human wisdom and ability and be wrong.

One Who Honors Order

In the church of Corinth there was apparently a degree of bedlam. This is why Paul wrote: “Let all things be done

decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40; see verse 33). The Holy Spirit is never the author of confusion, and He does not want believers to create confusion.

Ordinarily the Holy Spirit is not pleased with the interruption of anointed preaching, an altar call, or even as a minister or member of the congregation leads in prayer.

In His concern for order, the Spirit is looking for people who will wait for an appropriate time to yield to the Spirit’s promptings. When the Spirit moves upon a believer, He expects him not to be impulsive, but to be in perfect order with the proceedings. As proper decorum is observed, the believer can become the instrument to accomplish the Spirit’s purpose in an extraordinary manifestation of himself.

When we consider the profile of the kind of person the Spirit is looking for, the first impulse is to say, “No one is that perfect.” And that is true. But there are two attitudes toward this profile believers should be careful to avoid. Some may say, “I don’t measure up to the ideal, so I won’t expect or respond to the Spirit’s promptings.” Others may say, “God uses imperfect people, so it doesn’t matter how I live.”

The Holy Spirit comes to us not because we are perfect, but to help us grow in His grace. The important thing is to allow the Holy Spirit to manifest himself through us in the fruit of the Spirit, then to be sensitive to Him so He can manifest himself through us in the gifts of the Spirit as He wills.

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