

The Manifestations of the Spirit in the Scripture

I. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

- A. On the day of Pentecost, 120 intercessors were filled with the Spirit and then experienced the manifestations of the Spirit, which included the sound of rushing wind, tongues of fire resting on each person who spoke in a language that they did not previously know, and appearing as drunk. ***²Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house...³There appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues...⁶The multitude...were confused...⁷They were all amazed and marveled...¹ and perplexed...¹³Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”¹⁴But Peter...said...¹⁵“These are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.” (Acts 2:1-15)***
- B. Those who observed them had various responses. Some were amazed and perplexed and others mocked the Spirit’s work in them. We see the same responses to the activity of the Spirit today. Some see the manifestations as the work of the Spirit and others get angry or confused. Many are skeptical, seeing manifestations only as fleshly behavior. We recognize that some fleshly mixture, imitation, or exaggeration does not invalidate the genuine work of the Spirit in others.
- C. Throughout both biblical and church history unusual manifestations have been reported. There is biblical and historical precedence. For more on this see my document at MikeBickle.org called ***The Manifestations of the Spirit in Church History***. Most revivals have had physical and emotional manifestations of the Spirit. Manifestations caused by the Spirit’s presence have been documented throughout the history of revivals in virtually every part of the Body of Christ. There are thousands of testimonies from history that substantiate this as an historical fact.

II. MANIFESTATIONS IN THE SCRIPTURE

- A. ***Falling under the influence of the Spirit:*** This is often referred to as being “slain in the Spirit,” or resting in the Spirit, or being overcome in the Spirit. This is the most common manifestation. People feel lightness, often with a sense of joy. Some just lie down to receive more from God, such as emotional or physical healing, deliverance, or impartation of power for ministry.
1. Christians from every tradition have written of this manifestation through history, especially in times of revival. Some fell under conviction of sin, while others experienced an inner work of healing of their heart or received an impartation for ministry.
 2. In the Bible there are many examples of people who fell as they encountered God’s presence. John fell down in the presence of Jesus’ glory (Rev. 1:17), as did the disciples (Mt. 17:6). The soldiers who arrested Jesus fell to the ground (Jn. 18:6). Saul fell on the road to Damascus when he encountered Jesus’ glory at his conversion (Acts 9:4-8).
 3. Ezekiel fell down before the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 43:4; 44:4).

4. Daniel fell, had no strength, and even passed out, going into a deep sleep (Dan. 8:7-10, 17-18; 10:8-9). He was overwhelmed by God's presence, having no strength to get up (Dan. 10:9, 17). Daniel could hear and was aware of His condition and surroundings.
 5. Large numbers may be "incapacitated" by the power of the Spirit as occurred at the dedication of Solomon's temple when the people saw the "glory cloud" (2 Chr. 5:13-14).
¹³The house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house... (2 Chr. 5:13-14)
 6. God's glory was manifest in such power that the priests could not function or enter the temple because of God's glory (2 Chr. 7:1-2). At times the presence of God is "heavy" and can be felt as weight. People fall under it or gradually bend over until they eventually fall. The Hebrew word for glory is *kavod*, which means the "weight or heaviness" of God.
¹The glory of the Lord filled the temple. ²The priests could not enter the house...because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. (2 Chr. 7:1-2)
- B. **"Drunk in the Spirit":** those who were filled with the Holy Spirit appeared as drunk to people who did not understand (Acts 2:15). Many have reportedly been "drunk in the Spirit" as they appeared inebriated, staggered, laughed uncontrollably, spoke with slurred speech, and had a dizzy look in their eyes. Some have continued with these manifestations for days at a time! Paul spoke of being beside himself for God in contrast to being of sound mind (2 Cor. 5:13).
¹⁵These are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. (Acts 2:15)
¹³If we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if...of sound mind, it is for you. (2 Cor. 5:13)
- C. **Laughter:** laughter that is sometimes "uncontrollable" and lasts for hours is the manifestation of the joy of the Lord. This is not dependent on personality type as even depressed persons may break out with spontaneous laughter. The kingdom is joy in the Spirit (Rom. 14:17). One fruit of a spirit-filled life is joy (Gal. 5:22). Joy is a deep state of contentment, yet it is not limited to that. It can have a physical expression. Some believe it is wrong for joy to be expressed with laughter in a church setting. The manifestation of many laughing at the same time seems irreverent to some. Joy, gladness, and laughter are sometimes connected in Scripture (Ps. 126:2-3)
²Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing...³The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad. (Ps. 126:2-3)
- D. **Trembling:** the fear of God fell on the people near Daniel as he received a vision (Dan. 10:7). Daniel trembled in the fear of God (Dan. 8:17-18; 10:7-11), as did the disciples (Mt. 17:6). The guards around Jesus' tomb shook for fear when encountering an angel (Mt. 28:4).
⁷The men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled...⁸No strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength...⁹I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground...¹¹While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. (Dan. 10:7-11)

- E. **Shaking:** some shake, slightly or violently. Quakers were known for this and, thus, received their name. There are many examples in Scripture of those who shook or trembled in the fear of God. When Moses received the Ten Commandments, the people shook, along with the mountain (Ex. 19:16-18). Sometimes even buildings shook in God's presence (Acts 4:31; Isa. 6:4).
- F. **Speechless:** Daniel was speechless because of his encounter with God (Dan. 10:15-19). Some have an inability to talk because of losing the physical ability or mental concentration to speak. They may be conscious but cannot talk for a period of time (Ezek. 3:26; Lk 1:22).
²⁶***I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth so you shall be mute... (Ezek. 3:26)***
- G. **Weeping:** many have tears of joy, or the tenderness of feeling loved by God, or love for God, or weep in repentance or mourning over sin or spiritual dullness (2 Chr. 34:27; Hos. 12:4; Mt. 26:75; Lk. 19:41; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; Rev. 5:4). Some weep as the result of an inner healing and others because of a burden in intercession (Heb 5:7). Sometimes weeping suddenly turns to laughter.
- H. **Trances:** Peter and Paul fell into trances, allowing them to see and hear into the spirit world (Acts 10:10, 22:17). Balaam fell into a trance, or received an open vision (Num. 24:3-4).
- I. **"Pockets of power":** the report of small "pockets" of heightened activity of the Spirit is common in times of revival. When people walk into a specific area like this, they experience the Spirit's presence in an intensified way. They may fall, laugh, shake, cry, or receive a healing. An example of this dynamic occurred when Saul and his men went near a group of prophets (1 Sam. 19). When they came near the prophets, the Spirit came on Saul's men and they also prophesied. When Saul sent more men, they prophesied. Saul sent a third group who also prophesied (19:20-21). Finally Saul went and the Spirit came on him, and he prophesied (19:22-24).
- J. **Traveling by the Spirit:** some like Philip have been physically taken by the Spirit to another place (Acts 8:39-40). Others, like Ezekiel, go to another place in a vision (Ezek. 3:14; 8:3; 11:24). Some are taken on a journey after falling down by the Spirit's power. They might be out of body or in a vision or dream-like state. Some have the sense of God taking them to heaven or to various places on earth. Paul and John went to heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-4; Rev. 4:1)
³⁹ ***The Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away...⁴⁰ Philip was found at Azotus. (Acts 8:39-40)***
- K. **Fire:** The believers in the upper room saw fire resting on each person (Acts 2:3). God's fire fell from the sky in the Old Testament (Lev. 9:24; 1 Kgs. 18:38; 1 Chr. 21:26). In the end times there will be signs of blood, fire, and smoke (Joel 2:30-31). Fire will come from the sky in the first, second, third, and sixth trumpets and fourth bowl (Rev. 8:5-10; 9:17-18; 16:8). The two witnesses and the False Prophet will call fire from heaven (Rev. 11:5; 13:13).
¹⁹***I will show...signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke... (Acts 2:19)***

- L. Many manifestations could be listed, such as a talking animal (Num. 22:28), walking on water (Mt. 14:29), wrestling or traveling with angels (Gen. 32:28; 2 Kgs. 2:11), bones that raise the dead (2 Kgs. 13:21), shining faces (Ex. 34:30), visiting heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-3) and much more.

III. MANIFESTATIONS NOT SPECIFICALLY RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURE

- A. The Bible does not record all the possible experiences that the Spirit gives. It records examples of experiences that point to broader categories that are typical of how the Spirit works. John wrote of this principle, explaining that all the works of Jesus were not recorded in Scripture (Jn. 21:25). Manifestations that are not written in Scripture do not necessarily contradict the things written! Some are an expansion of the things Jesus did which were written in Scripture.

²⁵There are many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (Jn. 21:25)

- B. On the day of Pentecost, those in the upper room were filled with the Spirit and experienced manifestations of the Spirit which included rushing wind, tongues of fire, speaking a language that they did not previously know, and apparent drunkenness (Acts 2:1-15). Under the inspiration of the Spirit Peter proclaimed, “This is what was spoken of by Joel!” Yet when we study Joel 2, we do not find any of the manifestations that occurred on the day of Pentecost. Joel did not mention rushing wind, speaking in tongues or appearing as drunk. Peter did not defend the specific manifestations that were occurring, he simply said, “This is what Joel spoke of!”

¹³Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.” ¹⁴Peter...said to them, “Men of Judea...¹⁵These are not drunk, as you suppose...¹⁶But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...¹⁷I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh...” (Acts 2:11-17)

- C. Joel spoke of a future empowering by the Spirit (Joel 2:28), without describing all that would occur when his prophecy began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Peter could not produce “proof-texts,” but that did not mean that the manifestations of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were non-biblical.

- D. As long as manifestations do not contradict the purpose of Scripture they should not automatically be disregarded as non-biblical. Some wrongly conclude that all manifestations are non-biblical unless we can find an *exact* description of it in the Bible. We do not conclude that God can heal only diseases mentioned in Scripture.

- E. Are manifestations of the Spirit biblical? Yes. Are there specific proof texts for each one? No. We cannot verify every experience with an exact description in the Bible. However, they are experiences that are in accordance with clear biblical precedents and principles. Not every manifestation has an exact meaning but there are patterns that are common to many. The Spirit continues to do things that are in agreement with His character and the principles seen in the Bible.

1. For example, uncontrollable laughter is not in the Scripture but inexpressible joy is!

⁸*You rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory... (1 Pet. 1:8)*

2. Ezekiel fell down, was unable to speak, and was taken away by the Spirit to another city (Ezek. 1:28; 2:2; 3:12-14, 23-26; 8:3, etc.). Ezekiel's experiences legitimize other similar phenomena that may not look exactly his experience.
- F. We cannot assume that manifestations are false because we do not find an exact biblical description for each experience. Why? It was not necessarily the purpose of the biblical writers to provide a comprehensive list of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.
- G. The principle is that whatever manifestation is not disallowed in Scripture or contradictory to Scripture **is allowed** as long it bears godly fruit in the lives of those who experience it. This is not contradictory to *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) because it upholds the purposes of God as set forth in Scripture. We are not required to proof-text every manifestation. There is no reason to assume they are contradictory to the Bible as long as they are in line with encounters of God throughout "salvation history." In the 16th century some reformers destroyed church organs because they "were not found in the Bible." However, Psalms has many references to musical instruments being used while worshiping God, without specifically mentioning the organ.

IV. MANIFESTATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN COMMONLY REPORTED IN HISTORY

- A. Manifestations that have been commonly reported in meetings throughout the world and throughout church history include falling, laughing, weeping, shaking, "drunkenness," inability to speak normally, staggering, feeling lightness or heavy weight of glory, loss of strength, eyes fluttering, lips trembling, screaming, groaning, heavy breathing, gold fillings in people's mouths, or gold sparkles on people's faces, the sensation of wind, heat, electricity, tingling or pain on one's body to indicate the presence of the Spirit or as tokens of how to minister to people.
- B. Eyelids fluttering or moving rapidly is a common manifestations indicating the presence of the Spirit. Dancing in the Spirit is distinguished from choreographed dancing. Instances of dancing in the Spirit, as seen in the 20th-century Pentecostal revival involved one dancing with their eyes closed without bumping into anyone or anything, being under the direction of the Spirit.
- C. Some bend over backward or forward, blow or puff strongly, uncontrollably jumping up and down or hopping, rolling (i.e., holy rollers). Smelling or tasting good or evil presences, as well as hearing audible voices, receiving prophetic utterances are also experienced.
- D. John Wimber recommended people not refer to sounds as "animal noises" because the person involved is not trying to imitate an animal.
- E. Because some manifestations are in the Scripture, they are repeatable, yet without necessarily being normative. We are not to teach these manifestations as the "main and plain" commandments of Scripture. We are not to teach these as something all must do to be a mature believer.

- F. We are not to teach that specific manifestations are normative experiences that all should seek after. Some manifestations were special acts of the Holy Spirit rather than being normal occurrences. A mighty rushing wind or a building shaking is not common

V. PURPOSES OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. ***The fruit of manifestations:*** is seen in the lives of believers. They are greater intimacy with God; impartations of love, peace, joy and the fear of God; freedom from bondages (fear, anger, bitterness, pain, lust, etc.); physical healings and emotional healing; empowering for ministry (healing the sick, prophesying, intercession, etc.); refreshment. This leads to more evangelism.
- B. ***Enlarging of spiritual capacities:*** inner bondages overcome, tenderized emotions, empowering for ministering to others, impartations of love, peace, joy, sensitized to receive more prophetic impressions, the fear of the Lord, “pain killer” as the Spirit does a deep work on the heart, etc.
- C. ***Manifestation as signs:*** God sometimes uses a manifestation as a sign to others so that we will pay attention to what the Spirit is saying. When the Spirit gives signs, we ask what that specific sign means. How is the Spirit using it to build up the Church? The signs point to our need for a deeper connection with the Spirit. Manifestations, healing, and other spiritual signs are like a billboard that declares that God is working. A manifestation is a sign only if it signifies something that helps spread the gospel and builds up the kingdom or the lives of people.

VI. HOW DO WE EXPLAIN THESE PHENOMENA?

- A. Manifestations are human responses to encountering God’s immediate presence. Manifestations are a physical or emotional ***response to the Spirit’s activity*** rather than being directly caused by the Spirit. People react to the presence of the Spirit in a similar way to how they react to touching an electric wire! When our all-powerful God touches our weak human frame it impacts us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. For example, falling under the power of the Spirit occurs when our physical control is temporarily suspended by encountering the Holy Spirit.
- B. When God touches the natural world there is often a reaction that is “super” or “above” nature—it is supernatural. Our frail bodies are sometimes powerfully affected by God’s presence. The glory of God affects the physical body beyond its capabilities with spiritual encounters resulting in strange physical behavior. Physical manifestations occur when God increases the release of His manifest presence.
- C. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said: “The Holy Spirit affects the whole person. Man is body, soul, and spirit, and we cannot divide these. Man reacts as a whole. It is folly to expect that he can react in the realm of the spiritual without anything at all happening to the rest of him, to the soul, and to the body. These phenomena are indications of the fact that a very powerful stimulus is in operation, that the very physical frame is involved.” He argued that such strange phenomena are a means that God uses to get our attention. God shakes us to wake us up (Eph. 5:14).

- D. John Wimber: When warm and cold fronts collide, violence ensues: thunder and lightning, rain or snow, even tornadoes or hurricanes. There is conflict, and a resulting release of power that can be disorderly and messy and difficult to control.

VII. TESTING MANIFESTATIONS

- A. We must test all things by looking at the fruit or how it affects our lifestyle. We must all examine everything in the light of Scripture. We test all things to discern if these reactions are from God, the flesh, or the devil. We test it by seeing whether it honors the Scripture and bears godly fruit in people's lives.

²¹***Test all things; hold fast what is good. (1 Thes. 5:21)***

¹⁶***You will know them by their fruits...***¹⁷***Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit...***²⁰***Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Mt. 7:10-20)***

¹¹***They [the Bereans] received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11)***

- B. We are exhorted to test the spirits or to discern the spirit behind a teaching and its fruit.

¹***Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 Jn. 4:1)***

- C. In 1741 Jonathan Edwards wrote *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*. He called his readers to evaluate the awakening by looking past the enthusiastic behavior to see the fruit. He wrote of five distinguishing marks of the Spirit's work. He stated that Satan would not counterfeit activities that led to these responses. If we can answer yes to these then we should regard the manifestation as genuine even if it is unfamiliar to us.

1. Does it bring honor to the person of Jesus Christ?
2. Does it produce a greater hatred of sin and a greater love for righteousness?
3. Does it produce a greater regard for Scripture?
4. Does it lead people into truth?
5. Does it produce a greater love for God and man?

- D. In other words, what helps us determine a manifestation as the work of the Spirit is what results from it. It's not whether we fall down but rather what happens after we get up. Manifestations are not in themselves marks of spirituality, nor do they in themselves guarantee spiritual growth. The confirmation that a manifestation is of the Spirit is seen in the spiritual growth it brings. Is there a new love, humility, and holiness? Is there more fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness? Is there good fruit in the overall ministry or is the leader's focus on exalting Jesus or getting money, or trying to showcase how much power they have? Are people receiving training in the faith? Is there pastoral oversight? Are people growing in the fruit of the Spirit?

VIII. HOW TO RESPOND TO THE MANIFESTATIONS

- A. God has chosen foolish and despised things as the context for releasing power (1 Cor. 1:27-28). Therefore, we are not to automatically disregard a manifestation because it is strange or because we are unfamiliar with it. God has specifically chosen things despised by men to manifest power. ***²⁷God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, (1 Cor. 1:27-28)***
- B. We respond by expressing gratitude with humility for the present grace of God while being hungry for more; by being humble "learners" instead of proud "experts" in our approach to the things of the Spirit; by being humble and patient with others in our differences of perspective; by making room or giving opportunities for the Spirit to manifest Himself, yet within the boundaries of biblical restraints to show love to others; by being open to freely receive from God without striving to "make something happen."
- C. We can be closed in our spirit when we are afraid. We fear what we cannot understand. We fear the unknown, the unfamiliar, and the unpredictable.

IX. EXPOSING FALSE EQUATIONS ABOUT THE MANIFESTATIONS

- A. ***False equation #1: If a manifestation is genuine it will always bring lasting fruit and change.*** Scripture has many examples of people who stumble after encountering God in a powerful way.
- B. ***False equation #2: If you are sensitive to the Spirit you will be touched in the ways others are.*** Yes, some people quench the Spirit because of being closed with unbelief, fear, and pride. It is also true that many with fear, pride, or unbelief have encountered the Spirit in powerful ways.
- C. ***False equation #3: If the Spirit touches you then you will not have any control over your actions.*** Sometimes the Spirit touches someone in a physical way that is beyond their control. However, usually He works within the context of human responses. In other words, if the person continues to yield, more will usually happen. For example, a person who is laughing as a result of being touched by the Spirit can usually choose to stop or continue. There is usually an element of control on the human side, but, even still, there remains an ability to "pull out" of the experience. There are exceptions to this general rule.
- D. ***False equation #4: If I were more committed to Jesus I would receive more manifestations.*** Receiving manifestations of the Spirit is not a sign of commitment or spiritual maturity. The manifestations of the Spirit are freely received by faith, not by earning them. ***⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal. 3:5)***
- E. ***False equation #5: If you do not fall down then you are unspiritual or resisting the Spirit.***

X. EXPOSING DANGERS REGARDING THE MANIFESTATIONS

- A. ***Imitation:*** Some will imitate the manifestations through the power of suggestion or the desire to be seen as more spiritual than others. Some continue with a fleshly imitation after they have had a true manifestation of God's presence. We are to embrace the Spirit's touch on our emotions without emotionalism, which speaks of the exaggeration and manipulation of our emotions.
- B. ***Exalting outward manifestations:*** Some exalt outward manifestations above the inward work of the Spirit in one's heart. Transformation into the image of Jesus is the Spirit's highest goal in His work. We must keep our focus on Jesus rather than on outward manifestations which are merely signs of His presence. We do not seek manifestations in themselves but a deeper life in God.
- C. ***Pride:*** We must avoid the proud, or narrow, judgmental thinking of the haves and have nots.
- D. ***Fanaticism:*** Some get carried away into excesses of unbiblical behavior and ideas. A true move of the Spirit will always be attended by some "wild fire." We must not lay aside all restraints in the name of "the liberty of the Spirit."
- E. ***Neglect:*** Some neglect foundational issues in our faith because of giving undue attention to the manifestations themselves. For example: our prayer life, serving others, building our families and honoring our parents, loving our enemies, helping the poor, going to work, paying our bills, resolving relational conflicts, and being faithful friends.
- F. ***Exalting people:*** Overly exalting the weak human vessels that God anoints in His work. We must honor leaders without undue adulation of them.