



The  
*William Booth*  
Collection

## THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

### GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

From the "War Cry," March 14th, 1885.

MY DEAR COMRADES,

A good deal of attention is being given just now to what are known as the extraordinary "gifts of the Spirit;" that is, the ability to do something which is beyond the power of man to do without the direct operation of God. Such gifts as these were, without doubt, possessed by the Apostles both before and after the death of our Lord. They had the gift of tongues; that is, they received suddenly the power to speak languages which they had never learned. They had the gift of healing; that is, they cured the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and restored the dead to life instantaneously without the use of ordinary means. They wrought miracles; they caused events to happen that were contrary to the usual course of nature. These were very remarkable gifts, proving that God was with them, because no man could do these things unless God was operating directly through him.

These gifts were useful, inasmuch as they called attention to those who possessed them, declared that the mission of these Officers was Divine, and justified men everywhere in believing what they had to say.

For this reason they were important to the world, and their possession today might be a great blessing to mankind. There is not a word in the Bible which proves that we may not have them at the present time, and there is nothing in experience to show they would not be as useful today as in any previous period of the Church's history. No man, therefore, can be condemned for desiring them, and the recent remarkable signs and wonders wrought amongst us not only demand, but shall have our most profound and sympathetic consideration.

But it has occurred to me that, while desiring these extraordinary gifts, some of us may be neglecting forces and powers already existing within and amongst us that are equal to – perhaps greater in value than – those thus coveted.



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The Apostle exhorts the early saints to "stir up the gifts that were in them." These gifts were imparted by God and were important to the War – but they lay dormant, and therefore useless; and the Holy Ghost urges their possessors to stir up these gifts, to wake them from slumber and get them to work in helping to save the world.

My comrades, I feel there is room for the same exhortation today. By all means let us aspire after higher gifts, but by all means let us use those we already possess. How true it is that to him that hath – that is, who uses what he has – shall be given; and from him that hath not – that is, who uses not what he possesses – that which he already has shall be taken away! Neglect the ability you already have for glorifying God and saving men, and that ability will shrivel up, degenerate, and waste away.

It must never be forgotten that all real healing, whether of body or soul, whether accomplished in a moment or in a year of time, whether done apparently without means or through the use of means, is alike affected by the direct operation of the power of God; IT IS GOD WHO SAVES.

And it must ever be remembered that all gifts – ordinary or extraordinary – alike come from God; and that there is a danger of straining after those that seem to be extraordinary, while those already possessed lie unused and therefore useless.

For instance, a man may be longing after the "gift of tongues," and neglecting the tongue he already has; thinking how much good he could do if he could suddenly speak the German language, while all the time he is comparatively neglecting the use of English, which he can speak. Does any one say, "What a wonderful thing it would be if I could suddenly speak in a foreign tongue!" Let such an one stop and think what a wonderful thing it is that he can speak at all. Think, my comrade, if you had never possessed the power of speech, and were to have it suddenly bestowed, what a remarkable miracle it would appear. Suppose you knew something about it before; how you would desire it! How you would promise God to use it for His glory and the Salvation of souls if He would give it to you!



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And, then, think how you would feel if some man of God came along and laid his hands upon you and commanded you in the name of the Lord to speak and suddenly the gift came and you were enabled to pour out a flood of language – as you can now! How amazed, how delighted, how grateful you would be! How you would go about acknowledging and publishing the wonderful gift! And yet in reality it would not be a whit more a gift, or more remarkable, than is the ability to talk that you possess today. Oh, BRING THIS GIFT TO GOD, and praise Him for it, and set about using it for His glory.

Again, if God were to come to you offering to bestow upon you these extraordinary gifts of which we are speaking: if He said, "I will give you the power to heal the sick; upon whomsoever you lay hands, they shall be healed of whatever sickness they have; at your commands devils shall be cast out, and by your faith mountains shall be moved. But it can only be on condition that these gifts shall not be allowed to be idle. They must be exercised, and exercised solely for My glory and the Salvation of men; not to gratify your pride or feed your ambition, or make money, or give pleasure, or in any shape or form promote your own honour and glory and bigness;" what would you say? Would you not cry out, "Far be it from me, Lord, that I should desire Thy gifts to spend them on my selfishness and lusts.

"If Thou wilt give them I will not sell or use or barter them for either money or pleasure or fame or anything else; but on the contrary I will faithfully and constantly employ them for Thy glory, and to induce men to save their souls and to love and serve Thee."

But how is it, my comrades, with the gifts He has already imparted – with the hands and feet and brain and heart and money and time and influence you already possess? Are you using these for yourself, or are they laid on the altar, purified with the Blood and consecrated in the burning flame of a holy, spiritual, enthusiastic devotion to the interests of your Savior and the Salvation of the Blood-bought world?

Far be it, my comrades, from me to say one word that would stay the longing of any heart for the extraordinary gifts already mentioned. I long for them myself. I believe in their necessity, and I believe they are already amongst us. By all means let us have the perfection of the Divine





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method of working. The poor infidel world should be made to see all of God that is possible, in order that it may believe. But at the same time I cannot help being influenced by the closing verse of the twelfth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the chapter especially devoted to the consideration of extraordinary gifts, in which the Holy Ghost plainly says that there is "a more excellent way;" that is, a more valuable gift than any of these extraordinary ones.

This the apostle explains to be the possession of, the being filled with, that burning passion of love which filled the breast of Jesus Christ; and that this was the greater gift, because capable of accomplishing vaster results; a force that can do more for the advancement of the War and the Salvation of souls from sin and misery and hell, which can do more for the creation of peace and joy and Heaven than all the other gifts put together without it – a force which is not only in harmony with, but partakes of the very essence of that power which fills and sustains and gladdens the universe; for surely the nature of Jehovah Himself is love.

My comrades, let us covet, let us seek earnestly – nay, let us never rest until we possess, in all its fullness this celestial passion. My space is, I am afraid, now filled up. So I must say what I started to say about gifts in my next.

Meanwhile,

Believe me,

Yours full of expectation for greater things,

WILLIAM BOOTH.

March 9th, 1885.