**Bible Study July 27th 2023 – The Gifts of the Holy Spirit part 8 – the word of knowledge**

One of the characteristics of God is that He is Omniscient – all knowing. Our knowledge, on the other hand, is extremely limited. This is something that God pointed out to Job when he questioned God’s justice (Job 38.1ff).
In the days of Moses God revealed to His people what they needed to know (i.e. the O.T. Law) but there are many “secret things” which belong to the Lord (Deut. 29.29).
In Old Testament times God revealed other things to the prophets. Some of those things were for their own generation but others were for the benefit of future generations (Daniel 8.17 & 26; 1 Peter 1.10-12)
Some of God’s plans and purposes remained mysteries for many years until God revealed them to the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3.1-6; Romans 16.25-26).
The Apostle Paul received great revelations from the Lord, so great that God gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him from becoming too elated (2 Cor.12.7). He heard some things “that cannot be told” (2 Cor. 12.1-4). So, some of Paul’s words of knowledge would have been the revelations about God’s plans and purposes that he had received directly from the Lord.

God’s infinite knowledge includes His intimate knowledge of every single person that has ever lived and those that are yet to be born. The hairs of our heads are numbered (Luke 12.7); He knows when we sit down and when we rise up; before a word is on our tongue God knows it (Psalm 139. 1-6). He knows the secrets of our hearts (Psalm 44.21).

Our hearts are deceitful (Jer. 17.9-10) and because of the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3.13) we can easily deceive ourselves, however, when we read God’s Word or hear it preached, God is able to reveal the secrets of our hearts (Heb.4.12-13).

In a similar way God is able to reveal the secrets of someone’s heart through a word of prophecy (1 Cor.14.24-25). When we studied the gift of prophecy, we saw that its main purpose was upbuilding, encouragement and consolation (1 Cor. 14.3) or “to build up, to stir up and to cheer up”. However, sometimes it may contain an element of prediction or revelation. In such instances it is difficult to say whether something was a prophecy of a word of knowledge. As David Petts says “If the Holy Spirit is giving us supernatural revelation, what does it matter if we call it “a word of knowledge” or “prophetic revelation”? what is important is that God’s Spirit is at work in us.” (Body Builders p.242)

W.R. Jones defines the word of knowledge as “a fragment of knowledge that man could not know himself. It is knowledge only known to God and thereafter revealed to us through a gift of the Holy Spirit”. (Pentecostal Doctrine, ed. P.S. Brewster p.52)

We will now look at some examples of a word of knowledge:

1. 2 Kings 6.8-12 – God gave Elisha “a fragment of knowledge that man could not know himself” and Elisha was able to warn the king of Israel about the plans of the king of Syria.
2. 1 Samuel 9.15-20 & 10.1-9 – Saul came to Samuel hoping that he would be able to tell him where he could find his father’s asses which were lost. God first gave Samuel a word of knowledge for Saul that his father’s asses had been found three days ago and the following morning he gave him another word of knowledge about several things that would happen to him as confirmation that he would become king of Israel.
3. Mark 2.5-11 – Jesus knew what the scribes were thinking in their hearts. When He said “Why do you question in your hearts?...” they must have been really shocked!
4. John 1.47-50 – Jesus saw Nathaniel under the fig tree and He knew that he was a man he was without guile. This was enough to convince Nathanael that Jesus is the Son of God and King of Israel.
5. John 4.16-19 – Jesus knew all about the Samaritan woman’s life and she quickly realised that He was a prophet. By the end of the conversation she went back to tell people in the city “Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. can this be the Christ?”(v29).
6. Acts 5.1-11 – Ananias and Saphira were deceitful about the price they had sold their land for but God knew, and by the Holy Spirit giving him a word of knowledge, Peter also knew what God knew.
7. Acts 9.10-18 – God gave Ananias a word of knowledge about Saul in a vision and God even gave him the address where he would find Saul in order to pass on what God had said to him and to lay hands on him to receive the Holy Spirit and be healed.
8. Read The Gifts of the Spirit, Harold Horton p.55 – two examples of William Branham being given words of knowledge about people before praying for them to be healed. Words of knowledge such as this cause faith to rise in people’s hearts.
9. A personal example: In 1984 my Mum, who was 50 at the time, became ill. It started with eyesight problems, seeing double. Over the next three years her health deteriorated until she was getting intense headaches, having difficulty walking and then developed problems swallowing and breathing.
In August 1987 we had taken the youth on camp in Sussex. On August 19th at the start of one of the meetings Lowell Sheppard, a preacher from Canada, said that he believed there was someone in the meeting with an extremely sick relative and that we should pray right now. There were about 300 people in the meeting and normally I would have been a bit cynical because in any gathering of that size there was bound to be several people with a sick relative, but I knew that it was my that we were praying for.
This was before the days of mobile phones so it wasn’t until the next day that I got a message to phone my Dad. Mum had collapsed and stopped breathing at the precise time that we were praying for her in Sussex. She was revived by paramedics and taken to Macclesfield intensive care and put on a life support machine.
Over the next few months Mum’s condition deteriorated to the point where the doctors said that nothing could be done and they were going to switch the ventilator off but what gave me the faith to keep believing that God would heal her, was the word of knowledge given by Lowell Sheppard. At that point I was allowed to go in and “say goodbye” to my Mum but when I took hold of her hand and prayed for her she sat up in bed and so the ventilator was kept switched on.
A few weeks later her illness was diagnosed (herniation of the cerebellar tonsils) and a neurosurgeon in London performed the necessary operation after which she recovered. Mum went to be with the Lord aged 86.
10. An example from our church’s history: The first Pastor of our church was Jim Sweet. God told Fred Howell, who at the time was not a member of our church, to go and tell Jim Sweet that it was time for him to move on. Jim replied that he was correct and that Fred was the person who was to come and replace him. What a wonderful confirmation; God gave both of them words of knowledge for each other!