

The Gifts of the Body, Part 3

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1313

INTRODUCTION

In the previous lessons, I have tried to emphasize three points First, in order for the body to function, there has to be unity and love. Secondly, spiritual gifts are what make unity and love possible. Thirdly, every Christian should find their gift--by prayer and the filling of the Holy Spirit - and use it. When all of us operate our gifts in the energy of the Spirit, we build up each other or full maturity, the whole body becomes mature, and our witness and testimony is powerful.

In our last lesson we began to look specifically at the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. We said there were two categories of gifts--permanent and temporary. Last time we talked about the permanent gifts and saw that they are designed to build up the body. The temporary gifts, which we will cover in this lesson were designed to confirm the words of the apostles and prophets and ceased when their offices ceased.

A. The Past Purpose of the Miraculous Sign Gifts

There are four miraculous sign gifts listed in Scripture. They existed for the apostolic era and were designed for unbelievers, not believers, that they might be convinced that indeed the Word of God was being spoken by the mouths of the apostles and prophets of the early church. So, the purpose of these sign gifts was:

1. TO CONFIRM THE WORD

a. Mark 16:17-20

In verses 17-18 is a list of miracle that were to attend the initial preaching of the apostles. The people who did respond to them in that initial phase of the church did see these miracles happen. In verse 20, after the Lord's ascension in verse 19, it says that the apostles "*went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*" The word "*signs*" (Gk. semeion) always means "miracles" in the New Testament. Miracles, then, accompanied the apostles for the purpose of "*confirming the word.*"

b. 2 Corinthians 12:12

This is an important verse which specifically designates "signs," or miracles, as belonging to the apostles.

c. Hebrews 2:3, 4

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him (the apostles), God also bearing them (the apostles) witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy

Spirit.“ Certain gifts of the Spirit were specifically for the apostles, for the purpose of confirming the Word and establishing its veracity in the minds of people who had no other standard. There was no written Word of God. The standard of the New Testament was not yet in existence, so signs became the confirmation of the Word.

2. TO AUTHENTICATE THE APOSTLES

In the early church, the sign gifts were a necessary adjunct to the preaching and teaching of the apostles and early prophets. In fact, there is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that anybody had these gifts other than by the laying on of hands by the apostles. It was a direct ministry geared to the apostles and the initial prophets of the early church. B. B. Warfield says, “These miraculous gifts were part of the credentials of the Apostles, as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confines them to distinctly the Apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it.”

Certain passages specifically associate these miraculous gifts of the Spirit with the work of the apostles:

a. *Acts 14:3*

This verse describes the activities of Paul and Barnabas when they went to the city of Iconium during Paul’s first missionary journey. Signs and wonders were granted to them as apostles and prophets to proclaim the truth of God and have it verified by God.

b. *Romans 15:15-19a*

Paul says in these verses that he spoke only those things which Christ told him to speak and that his ministry was verified by signs and wonders. Notice that these miracles were not for believers but to confirm the word to unbelievers.

So, the purpose and function of the special, miraculous gifts of the Spirit -was to authenticate the apostles as true messengers from the true God and thus confirm the gospel of salvation in the mind of unbelievers. Incidentally, as a by-product of these miracles, the believers who saw them developed even more faith.

B. The Present Pointlessness of the Miraculous Sign Gifts

The church today no longer needs the confirmation that the early church once needed. We do not need miracles as a standard by which we verify somebody’s declaration. We don’t need somebody to stand up and preach, then do a miracle so we will know he is telling the truth. We have another standard--the Word of God. When someone preaches, we can match him to the Word of God. If he does not stand that test, we know that he is not a true teacher, but a false one. We do not need confirming miracles because the Bible is our confirmation.

In Luke 16:31, Abraham told the rich man in Hades, “*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*” If the Word of God isn’t sufficient, miracles won’t change a person’s mind. Now that Scripture is complete, it is to be our standard. So, confirming miracles are irrelevant, immaterial, and extraneous.

NOTE: In Ephesians 4:11, Paul lists the gifted men that God has given to the church --the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. We have already seen that the apostles and prophets were for the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and no longer exist today. No miraculous, confirming gift is mentioned in Ephesians 4 where these gifted men are mentioned. In fact, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is the only one of his epistles that even mentions the miraculous sign gifts. Nowhere does Paul say that pastors, evangelists, or teachers should have any of these gifts. If the confirming gifts of the Word were still needed, they would be given to the men who preach the Word, wouldn’t they! What would be the point of giving confirming gifts to people who aren’t

preachers? If, in fact, these gifts still exist, they should belong to the great preachers and teachers in the world, because these are the men who are speaking and whose message has to be confirmed.

So, to conclude and summarize this introduction, the sign gifts were for the apostolic era to confirm the words of apostles and prophets. When these men passed away, so did the need for these gifts, because the Bible, then, became the standard. The miraculous sign gifts were temporary and were never designed to belong to the edification of the body.

I. THE DEFINITIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. The Permanent Edifying Gifts

B. The Temporary Sign Gifts

1. THE GIFT OF MIRACLES (1 Cor. 12:10, 28)

*** *Have miracles ceased today?***

No, of course not! To say that miracles have ceased would be untrue. When I say the gift of miracles has ceased, I do not mean God doesn't do miracles. God is the God of miracles. The greatest miracle God ever does is to take a degenerate, debased, sin-sick soul on the way to hell, turn it around, and recreate it into a citizen of heaven. God is constantly doing miracles in our lives, but this is not to say that the gift of miracles still exists. God does miracles by His own sovereign design and as a result of prayer; but this is not the same as the apostolic gift of miracles which has ceased.

a. The limited effect of miracles

1) With Christ

Jesus did many different kinds of miracles, including raising the dead, as proofs of His deity and verification of His Messiahship. But it's interesting to note that these miracles had a very limited effect. Not only did Israel refuse to believe Him, but they finally concluded that He did His miracles by the power of Beelzebub, or Satan.

2) With the apostles and the prophets

Paul's casting out of an evil spirit at Philippi caused such chaos that he was beaten up, thrown in jail, and put in stocks (Acts 16:16-24). The restoration of the lame man at Lystra by Paul seemed at first to have a great effect on the people, but soon after they stoned Paul and left him for dead (Acts 14:8-19). Now that's a rather minimal effect! After the miracle in Philippi, there is no mention of any miracle wrought by Paul for two years. There is no record of miracles ever happening at Antioch, Corinth, Thessalonica, Derbe, or Berea. Paul put no emphasis on the working of miracles but instead, he continually stressed the need for faith. In his list of requirements for elder and deacons, he does not mention the gift of miracles. There is no emphasis in the Bible or the working of miracles because it was obvious to Paul and to every other New Testament writer, that when the apostolic era ended, the gift of miracles was no longer needed.

b. The limited purpose of miracles

As we have already seen, miracles were for the infancy stage of the church to verify the gospel through signs wonders, and mighty deeds.

c. The limited time of miracles

In order to understand how God used miracles, you must observe the four periods in Scripture where miracles occurred.

1) *The period of Moses*

Moses initiated the first period of miracles. His miracles were performed in reference to the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 7:3). The miracles attested to Pharaoh that God was working in Israel, verified to the Israelites that God was at work, and substantiated Moses as God's appointed ruler.

2) *The period of Elijah and Elisha*

Of all the prophets, these were the ones who did the miracles. The reason was that Israel was involved in the idolatrous worship of Baal and they needed miracles to authenticate the authority of God and the fact that He was indeed talking through these prophets (1 Kings. 18:36).

3) *The period of Christ and His apostles*

In Luke 11:20, Christ indicated that the miracles which He performed substantiated that He was from God and authenticated His offer of the Kingdom. Also, the apostles' miracle authenticated that Jesus was indeed their Messiah.

4) *The period of the early church apostles*

The miracles which were performed by the apostle of the early church were designed to corroborate to unbelievers the testimony of God (see 1 Cor. 14:22) on the purpose of tongues).

So, in each of the four periods, the miracles were worked against a background of unbelief and were designed to be a sign to unbelievers; whether it was unbelieving Pharaoh, unbelieving Egyptians, unbelieving Jews, or unbelieving Gentiles. The miracles have always been temporary in any age, and with the completion of the Bible, their time ended. The authentication of any minister ceases to be the miracles and becomes the Word of God. God is still doing miracles today, but not to authenticate His Word.

2. THE GIFT OF HEALING (1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30)

a. *The definition*

The spiritual gift of healing was the ability to heal whenever the opportunity presented itself, not in one's own power, but in the power of Christ. For example, in Acts 3: 6 Peter said to the lame man, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*" Peter didn't heal by his own power--he had the ability to call on the power of Christ to heal at any time.

b. *The purpose*

As we have seen, the purpose of all the miraculous sign gifts, and in this case the gift of healing, was to confirm the Word and to authenticate the apostles to unbelievers.

c. *The cessation*

The gift of healing has ceased. Now, I'm not saying that healing has ceased. God in His grace still heals. We've all prayed for people who were past the point of medical aid and God sovereignty healed them--but the gift of healing has ceased! It ceased with the apostolic era.

*** *Which spiritual gift brings healing today?***

Today God heals in His sovereign will in response to the prayer of faith. I believe that there is a gift that brings about healing - the gift of faith or prayer. God often heals in response to prayer; and remember, if the gift of healing still existed it would belong to the teachers of the Word. We can't deny that people are healed, but it's possible that a person who thinks he has the gift of healing actually has the gift of faith and God is responding to their prayer--not their power.

The New Testament writers knew that the spiritual gift of healing was coming to an end. Even in the latter years of the apostles ministry this gift began to disappear - people who were sick stayed sick!

1) *God refused to heal Paul* (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

2) *Timothy was sick with a probable ulcer* (1 Tim. 5:23). Did Paul tell Timothy to go find someone with the gift of healing? No. He told him to "*take a little wine for thy stomach's sake.*" In other words, medicine was on its way in and the gift of healing on its way out.

3) *Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus* (2 Tim. 4:20). If Paul had the gift of healing (he had healed

previously), would he not have exercise it on behalf of Trophimus?

4) *James said to pray for the sick* (James 5:13). The book of James was written long before 1 Corinthians. Do you know what he said to do when someone was sick? He didn't say, "Find the person with the gift of healing." Rather James said, "*is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.. Is any sick among you? Let him call or the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick*" (Js. 5:13-15). Before 1 Corinthians was ever written, James knew that in years to come, the apostolic gift of healing would be nonexistent. The wisest counsel he could give the church was to seek, by faith, the healing that God offers.

*** *If the gift of healing has ceased, what is the explanation for all the healings that are going on today?***

First of all, let me say that a great deal of these supposed healings are fake - and I say that very honestly. When I was in seminary I did a full study of this. I found out about a card system that is used in these healing services. It's an assembly line approach where the people are given different colored cards categorizing them into their respective problems--blue cards into this line, green cards into that room, white cards... sorry, can't handle those. If you have a missing limb, you don't make it into the line because they can't handle those.

This brings up the second point which is that the healings are always internal problems that are invisible to anyone else. Consider the fact that Mayo Clinic, some years ago, made the statement that of all sick people are sick because they think they're sick. In other words, they are psychosomatically related illnesses. It's nice that somebody can convince.

Thirdly, I believe Satan provides many so-called healings. If a man has the gift of healing, why isn't he walking down the corridors of hospitals healing people? What's he doing in a tent?

Now sometimes there may be a real cure because God has answered prayer, not because some man did it. Sometimes God sovereignly heals in response to the prayer of faith. I believe there are some "healers" who just think they have the gift of healing, but in actuality have the gift of faith. They just don't understand their theology. The idea that you can heal people in an assembly line is ridiculous! Even the disciples couldn't do that.

3, 4. THE GIFT OF TONGUES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

(1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30)

a. *What was the gift of tongues and what was its use?*

The gift of tongues was a Spirit-given ability to declare the wonderful works of God in a foreign language, unknown to the speaker, as a miracle of verification. In Acts 2:1-14 we are given an account of the first occurrence of tongues in the New Testament - this is where it all begins.

1) Verse 3

The word "*tongues*" is the Greek word glossa, which literally means "languages."

2) Verse 5, 6

A great multitude of foreign Jews had gathered together at Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, and God provided a miracle by which the disciples could speak to every man in his own language and declare the wonderful works of God. This miracle attested to the truth of the most wonderful work that God ever did--to send Jesus Christ to die and be resurrected.

3) Verse 11

The gift of tongues was a declaration of the wonderful works of God.

4) Verse 14

The gift of tongues did not substitute for preaching because immediately after the tongues experience came the sermon of Peter (v. 14-40). Tongues were not necessarily to preach the gospel and convict of sin, they were merely to attest that God was going to speak. The wonderful works of

God were declared and then came the preaching.

b. *Why did speaking in tongues occur elsewhere in the book of Acts? Did these occurrences follow the same pattern as in Acts 2?*

1) *The Samaritan believers in Acts 8:15-17*

After Acts 2, the next occurrence of tongues was in Samaria. The Jews hated the Samaritans because they were a mixed race. However, after the Samaritans received the gospel, the apostles from Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria. When the apostles arrived, the Samaritans "*received the Holy Spirit*." At this point, I believe the people spoke in tongues because it would have been very nasty for the Jewish believers to say, "Well, you Samaritans, we're not getting together with you on any common ground." If the miracle on tongues occurred for the Jews in Jerusalem, the same miracle would have to occur in Samaria otherwise the Jews would not accept the Samaritans into their fellowship. Tongues occurred in Samaria so that the Jews would know that the church was to be one.

2) *The Gentile believers in Acts 10:44-46*

After Samaria, the gospel reached the Gentile world in the person of Cornelius and those that were with him. After the Holy Spirit fell on them they spoke in tongues. The believing Jews who saw this were shocked because these Gentiles had the same experience that they had at Jerusalem. It was important for the Gentiles to have this tongues experience in order that the Jew might know that Christ was starting an organism where everybody was equal. Whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile, they were one in Christ; so the same miracle happened as the Holy Spirit came on each group.

3) *The remnants of the Old Testament saints in Acts 19:1-7*

Acts 19 tells of a handful of leftovers from the Old Testament who were saved under the old economy, and baptized by John the Baptist, but didn't know that Jesus had arrived. When Paul came across these men in Ephesus he told them about Jesus, they believed, they were baptized in His name, they received the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with tongues. Now you say, "Why did these men have to speak in tongues" Because they needed to have the same miracle that occurred with the Jews at Pentecost so that they all would be one. There would be no levels of inequality. This was critical. The miracle of tongues occurred those four times in Acts to bring everybody into the one fold.

c. *When the miracle of tongues occurred, was it always: a known language?*

Yes, every time tongues occurred legitimately in the New Testament it was a known foreign language...unknown to the speaker.

1) *Acts 2*

The Greek word translated "*tongues*" is glossa which means "*languages*."

2) *Acts 10:46*

The Gentiles spoke with tongues and glorified God. How would they know they were glorifying God unless they were talking in a language that could be understood?

3) *1 Corinthians 12:10*

Paul speaks of various "*kinds of tongues*." The word "*kinds*" is from the Greek word *genos* from which we get our word "*genus*." *Genos* means a nation, a race, or a kind. "*Kinds of tongues*," therefore, means specific, national languages or races of languages.

4) *1 Corinthians 12:10*

The companion gift is "*the interpretation of tongues*." The Greek word for "*interpretation*" is *ἑρμηνεία* which literally means *translation*. If somebody had the gift of speaking in true languages, somebody else had the gift of translating them. You can't translate gibberish.

5) *1 Corinthians 14 (KJV)*

Where the word "*unknown*" precedes "*tongues*," it is always in italics. This means that "*unknown*" was supplied by the translators - it is not in the original Greek.

6) *1 Corinthians 14: 7*

Paul says that any use of tongues would have to follow grammatical structure.

7) 1 Corinthians 14:21

Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11, 12 where the tongues referred to by Isaiah was the known Assyrian language. There is no question about it, in every occasion of legitimate tongues, it was always a known language.

There is no question about it, in every occasion of legitimate tongues with the modern tongues, it was always a known language.

* What is wrong with the modern tongues movement?

1) *It confuses the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.*

It is said that the coming of tongues is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is not true 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, *"For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body."* This happens at salvation.

Romans 8:9 says, *"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."* Every believer has the Holy Spirit! 1 Corinthians 3:16 says that all Christians are the temple of God with the indwelling Holy Spirit. Every believer has the Spirit.

2) *It subordinates Christ to the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit's ministry is to exalt Christ, but the tongues movement reverses it. They teach that if you're a Christian and you haven't spoken in tongues, you're a second-class Christian. You're not first-class until you had the Holy Spirit baptism and spoken in tongues. This teaching subordinates Christ to the Holy Spirit.

3) *It creates two levels of Christians - the "haves" and the 'have-nots'."*

There is no difference - we're all one in the Spirit.

4) *It creates a false sense of unity.*

I believe that the modern tongues movement is one of the greatest factors leading to the ecumenical movement and the one-world church of Revelation 17. Modern Christianity will never get together on theology, but it will sure get together on experience. The whole tongues movement is crossing denominational lines at 90 miles an hour. People are rallying together under this banner, where they could never get together under the banner of biblical theology. This is not true unity!

Conclusion

With these temporary sign gifts, God made provision for the confirming of His Word and the nurturing of the infant church. Today of seeking these things, let's thank God that we don't need them anymore because we have the standard of the Word of God. God authenticates His message today by His Word, and we seek to minister the edifying permanent grace gifts to one another that they may grow to full stature.

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