

The Temporary Sign Gifts, Part 1

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:10

Code: 1856

This morning I want to talk about what is called in 1 Corinthians 12:10 the gift of miracles, the gift or the workings of miracles. There are four temporary sign gifts listed there; miracles, healings, languages, and the interpretation of languages. And for this morning anyway, we want to look at this gift of miracles. Now we need to discuss initially some things about it. Number one, I am not going to say this morning God can't do miracles. So let's get that straight at the outset. God can, does, do whatever God wants to do. And if He wants to do something that is against the normal natural law, He will do it. And we are not putting any limitations on God at all. We are only trying to categorize His operation and deal fairly with Scripture. Please don't say John doesn't believe God does miracles. Absolutely He does. In fact, He does them hour by hour and the greatest miracle of all is the miracle of a new birth, because people are created new creatures in Christ. We're not denying God the power or the desire or the will to do miracles.

Secondly, it is important that we carefully define what we mean by a miracle. People will say the other day I found a parking place at Fedco, it was a miracle. You know? That is not a miracle in terms of the Bible definition. Or my son passed a certain course, it was a miracle. That maybe closer to a miracle, but that still is not what is meant by the Bible definition. Or I needed a certain thing and it came in the mail and it was a miracle. We throw that word around all over the place. So what is a miracle. A miracle is a supernatural intrusion into the natural law, which can have no other explanation than that God is acting.

A supernatural intrusion into the natural law that can have no other explanation than that God is acting. If there is any other possible thing like well, circumstances could allow you to find a parking place at Fedco. Circumstances could allow your son to pass a course, he studied hard. Circumstances can accommodate a lot of things, but when a miracle happens, it is a supernatural intrusion into the natural flow of law and only God could be responsible.

We were at Forest Home a few weeks ago, and we'd get up in the morning and the lake at Forest Home is very placid and totally calm in the morning. And one morning we got up and the kids and I looked out the window and there were ripples going across the lake. And one of the kids said, "Dad there's somebody down at the water." And I looked around and I said, "I can't see anybody." But they said, "the ripples are the water." Sure enough we went out on the porch and there was somebody way down in the corner throwing rocks in the lake and the ripples were going all the way across. Miracles are God throwing rocks in the lake of natural law. Natural law continues in its placid course

until God decides you're going to do something different and He invades it.

It's like a man for example who builds a model city and I don't know if you've ever seen them. I've seen them in exhibitions here and there. A huge model city and cars go and trains work and there all kinds of little things. Lights are going on and off and little deals are happening, and he's running it from a remote control, electronic board. But every once in a while, he'll reach over and pick this thing up and stick it over here. If you were running around in that little world, you'd say what's going on. That building use to be over there and now it's over...God created the universe. And every once in a while He usually lets it all go and runs it by remote control, but once in a while He picks something up and sticks it over here. He'll raise somebody from the dead or He'll make an ax head float on water or He'll part the Red Sea or something astounding and astonishing just so the people don't forget that He's the one running it, that He's the one who's there.

And that's a miracle, something that has no other explanation. Now in order to get a clear understanding of this, because we have to understand the general category of miraculous operation before we can look at the miracle gifts. I want us to consider Jesus Christ, who is the greatest miracle worker, and who will give us what we need to understand about miracles. In his excellent book entitled Counterfeit Miracles, B. B. Warfield begins the book with these words. "When our Lord came down to earth, He drew heaven with Him. The signs which accompanied His ministry were but the trailing clouds of glory, which He brought from heaven which is His home. The number of the miracles which He wrought may easily be underrated. It has been said that in effect He banished disease and death from Palestine for the three years of His ministry. If this is exaggeration it is pardonable exaggeration. We ordinarily greatly underestimate his beneficent activity as He went about as Luke says, doing good. His own divine power by which He began to found His church, He continued in the apostles whom He had chosen to complete this great work."

Now, I want you to stay with me and keep your thinker going because we're going to look at some interesting things. Jesus was a miracle worker. Why? Jesus was a miracle worker. For what reason? Notice John Chapter 2, verse 11, John Chapter 2, verse 11, says this. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and thus manifested forth His glory." Stop there. Why did Jesus do miracles to manifest His glory? What is His glory? The composite of His attributes as deity. Why did He do miracles? To reveal Himself as God. Miracles, now mark this one, because you're going to hear it again, miracles are confirming signs of the revelation of God. Miracles are confirmation that God is being revealed. That is always, has always been, will always be their intent. Miracles are confirmation that God is being revealed.

John Chapter 5, verse 36, and there are others in John, but these are a couple you can look at. "I have greater witness than that of John." In other words, Jesus says if you're trying to find out who I am, there's a greater testimony than the testimony of John the Baptist. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father has sent me. My

origin, my heavenly origin, my divine commission is proven by my miracles." The end of the gospel of John, the 20th Chapter, and the 30th verse sums up John's purpose in the entire gospel.

And John 20:30 says this, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book." He has given about eight of the miracles, there are others. Many others, why? Verse 31, "These are written in order that," and here comes the reason, "you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and the believing you might have life through His name." Now listen, Jesus did miracles to prove God was being revealed in His living word. These are written that you might believe that this Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. God was revealing Himself.

Look at Acts 2:22 as long as we're rolling through, let's look at one other. Peter preaching at Pentecost says, "Ye men of Israel hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth a man approved or commended by God among you." God wanted you to know who Jesus was, so God approved of Him. So God established Him. So God commended Him. How? By miracles and wonders and signs. Why does God do miracles? In order to corroborate His self disclosure. In order to confirm His own revelation. Miracles then are always in the Scripture for one purpose. To prove God is speaking, whether in the Old Testament written word, the New Testament living word, or the New Testament written word, miracles corroborate God's revelation. That is their only purpose.

We find that all through Scripture. When God wanted people to know He was speaking, God did miracles so that they would say this has to be God. That's the point. God normally operates the universe according to His created natural law. But when it comes time for God to make a self revelation, He will step in and contrary to natural law, make things occur, which have no other explanation than that God is being revealed. And so Jesus' miracles were to reveal His deity.

Now, it's important, I think, that we understand that there are only certain times when God does this. Jesus lived how many years? Thirty-three, right? Do you know how many years of that He did not do any single miracles? Thirty of them. For 30 years of His life He did no miracles. I know there are apocryphal writings that say when He was little He became angry with an evil child and killed Him with a word, drop dead and it worked and that kind of a thing. And I know that it's been said in apocryphal writings that He made clay pigeons and then blew on them and they flew away and things like that when He was a little boy. Some others have said that He made instant things for His father to help in his business and so forth. That isn't so.

Jesus never did a single miracle for the first 30 years of His life. You say, how do you know that? Because John 2:11 says that when He turned water to wine, it says, "this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee." He'd never done one before that. You say what does that prove. It proves that not all ages and not all times and not all periods have God's intention for miracles. Only when God gets ready to reveal Himself. And Jesus never revealed Himself until He began His

ministry after His baptism, and then the miracles began.

It lasted for His three year ministry. Jesus never did a single miracle before the hour of His revelation as God. Not all ages are miracle ages. If you study the Old Testament, you'll find there really are only two periods of miracles in the Old Testament. One is the time of the revealing of the law to Moses. And the other is the life of Elijah and Elisha when God was laying down the platform of prophetic revelation through His prophets. And it was those two periods that were miracle periods. The rest of the whole Old Testament you'll find very scarce use of miracles, and as you get to the end of the Old Testament, none at all.

It isn't as if from the very beginning 'til not they're just miracles, miracles, miracles, miracles going on all the time. And the reason is because God had a specific thing to reveal. God had a specific word to reveal with limits and boundaries around it. And when God was revealing either His written word or Christ His living word, it was then and then only that He used miracles as a corroborating and confirming sign. And as I say there are other times, during those other times, when miracles happened rarely and abnormally. And we would still allow for God to do a miracle, never confining it. But that is not the norm. That is not the pattern as if there were just endless miracles going on. And to talk to some Christians today, you'd think it was so.

Some Christians just miracles and miracles and miracles. You turn on some of those television programs and there's no end to it. In fact, you know what happens, you get so many of them none of them mean anything. None of them mean anything anyway. But if...there's just no evidence that those are legitimate. God then has designed miracles for a single purpose to confirm His revelation. And once God has revealed Himself, then the miracles have no continuing purpose. For example, when God finished the Old Testament, the Old Testament was closed and done and set down. It's a 400 year period of history between Old and New Testament when God didn't particularly do anything. Certainly nothing miraculous.

Then there is a New Testament. Miracles happen. The New Testament is finished, the book is closed, no more miracles. And then all of a sudden the miracles start popping up in the founding of the Roman Catholic church in the 300 and 400. What happened in the meantime? Where have they been? Is God reconfirming the Roman Catholic church? If so, we're in the wrong place. We'd better go down the street if that's God's revelation. You see there have been periods of time. Now Jesus did miracles to convince people that He was of God. The fact that He was God. God's self revelation. Matthew 13, there are a lot of verses now, so I'm going to really fly around. So you'd probably be better off to grab one or two of them and write the rest down. Matthew 13:54, "He did many mighty works." And in 58 it says, "And He did not many mighty works because of their unbelief."

Now notice this. Jesus did miracles to convince people that He was God. But listen to me, people who already were open to that, people who already were open to believing. People in whom the Father had already generated faith. He did miracles to convince people He was God. But it didn't ever convince a lot of people. Only the ones who were ready and prepared and so the miracles were confirming signs. In fact, at the end of John I read you, it says, they He did them for His disciples who already believed. The miracles have never been a great saving thing. God has never used miracles just to save people. He's always saved people with the preaching of the gospel.

We'll talk more about that in a minute. Now once the evidence was complete that Jesus was God and it was all written down, it was completed, Christ finished His work, the apostles all wrote it down, then you find the gift fading away. Now listen, Jesus not only had the ability to do miracles, but so did the apostles and prophets, the New Testament writers, the ones who were the heartbeat of the early church. Why? Because there was no written word to corroborate their preaching, and so God gave them miraculous abilities. And they could do miracles because there was no other way for God to prove to people that these guys were speaking the truth among the myriad of people speaking in that time of the world.

Today if a guy comes up and says he's a prophet of God, we don't need him to do a miracle. We just compare him with this, right? Because here is the confirming word. But in those days there was no standard, no revealed written word. So miracles were the attestation. Miracles then were to authenticate the living word and the written word. So they belong to just two categories, Christ and the apostles and those that worked with them in the foundations of the church. Those are the two groups and only those two that really in the life of the church ever did miracles.

Now let me show you some verses. This is very important. Look at Mark 16:17. Now I know there's a big debate about whether Mark 16:9 and following is in or out, and I don't want to get into all of the technicalities of that. There is some recent evidence that even though it isn't in two of the very most significant manuscripts, it is in others even older than that. And there are some folks who believe that it definitely should be included. I use it because it says the same thing several other passages will say and only emphasizes it. And if it is the truth of God and I always want to be sure I don't leave anything out that shouldn't be, so I'll share it with you any way, but I feel that this helps to build together a total case. It isn't the only Scripture or we wouldn't be able to base it on this.

But verse 17, He's talking to His eleven, and He says, now you're going to...there's really nothing here that we should be concerned about frankly. He says, you're going to go out and preach. Now this is what's going to happen when you preach. "These signs are going to follow those who believe." Now this is for the apostles. "This is for those people in my name, I'm going to cast out demons and speak with new languages, take up snakes and if they drink any poison, it'll not hurt them. They'll lay hands on the sick and recover." All right, miracles are going to accompany the apostolic gospel. As you go out and preach and people believe they're going to see signs and wonders. Why? So the rest of the

world will know this is the truth and that God is here and this is His word.

So then verse 19, "After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received into heaven and sat on the right hand of God." Jesus left. Now watch verse 20. "And they went forth and preached everywhere. The Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." Now listen to me, how is the word of the apostles confirmed? With signs. God was attesting to their preaching just as He had attested to the deity of Christ by the signs and wonders and miracles. A miracle acts as a sign pointing to God's revelation to create wonder in the minds of people. That's how those three terms are used.

So everywhere they went the Lord was confirming His word with signs. Listen to me, the Lord wants His word to be believed. He wants it confirmed and the miracles they did were confirming that this was God's truth. Listen, when I get up and preach God's truth to you, I don't need any miracles because I have this revelation which substantiates itself and becomes the confirmer of my words. But in those days with no written revelation, miracles did that. And I want to take you a step further. Look at Acts 14:3. Acts 14:3, it says this. Here is a group of people leaving. "The unbelieving Jews," verse 2, "stirred the Gentiles and made their minds evil against the brethren. A long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord who gave testimony unto the word of His grace."

Now listen, how does God give testimony to the word? Here were these people preaching the word, people who had touched the lives of the apostles. People who were foundational in the early church. People who were on the cutting edge of laying out the foundations. How did God give testimony to His word even granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. How is it that God confirms His word then? By miracles, signs, and wonders in the early church. That is His purpose. Now I believe, people, if you look at 2 Corinthians 12:12, you see a further demonstration of this.

I'll add a footnote while you're turning to 2 Corinthians 12:12. The only people that we ever know in the New Testament in the church age, after the Spirit has come, who were able to do miracles were either the apostles or those with whom the apostles worked. We never see it extend any further than that. We never see it get any wider than that circle. The apostles and some conclude and only they on whom the apostles laid hands. But certainly, the apostles and they whom the apostles knew personally and commissioned that or passed on that power in the Spirit.

All right, 2 Corinthians 12:12 helps us. "Truly," notice the definite article, "the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." Notice these signs of an apostle, not a sign of an apostle, but these signs of an apostle. And what were they? The ability to do signs and wonders and mighty deeds. You say what were those miracle powers then? They were the signs of a what? Of an apostle. Not of just every Christian, but of a specially sent one. The twelve and a few other early sent ones with a small A; the New Testament apostles. Not just the apostles of the Lord as we saw a few weeks ago, but perhaps some of the apostles of the

church in that early infancy. The signs of an apostle, the ability to do miracles.

Now look at Hebrews 2:3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Now what salvation is it? "Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." The salvation that they're talking about was first spoken by Christ, right? He arrived in the world and preached the gospel. "And was confirmed to us by them that heard Him." Who was it that heard the Lord? The apostles. The ones around Him. They're the ones that brought it to us, and verse 4 is the key. "God was bearing them witness with signs and wonders and diverse miracles and," notice this, "gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." They had special gifts to the Spirit. Special miracle powers to confirm the word. If a guy comes in and says I speak the gospel of God. And he tells you, well, how do I know it's true guy. And then wonders and signs appear that have no other explanation than that God is doing them. I say that's all right, I agree.

Today, the same thing is accomplished when somebody preaches by comparing them with the word of God, which I believe, if studied carefully proves itself to be just what it claims. Verification enough. So Warfield says, "These miraculous gifts were part of their credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confine them to distinctly the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it." So these marvelous abilities to confirm the word occurred only when God was revealing the word. Now mark that in your mind. If we say miracles continue to go on today and they have only purpose and that is to confirm God's revelation, then God is still revealing His word. And if He's still revealing is word, your Bible is incomplete and Revelation 22:18 is a lie, because it says, "If you add anything to this book, will be added unto you the plagues that are written in it."

And so when people come along today, particularly charismatic people, and they say there are miracles going on, they will say at least their consistent, that God is still revealing Himself today. And many of them get visions and revelations and words from God and so forth and that is consistent. Even they recognize that miracles are a corroboration of God's revelation. But if we believe that the word of God is finished and complete and closed and the revelation is over with and God has said what He has said and nothing is to be added to it, then there is no reason for a continuing normal flow of constant miracles to be happening because God is not revealing His word anymore. It's done.

It's clear from the gospels through Acts, in fact, that there's a progressive lessening of miracles, a lessening and lessening and lessening so by the time you get to Paul's Epistles it just isn't even there. You don't even find them. People get sick in Paul's Epistles, they stay sick, including Paul. But once the revelation...and incidentally, we believe it as heresy to say revelation continues. Once it is complete and the Bible is done, the purpose of miracles is done. That's enough. You say, but what if people won't believe the Bible. What if they won't believe that? Well, then they don't believe miracles, because it's full of miracles. It can be historically verified. And Jesus said, "Woe unto you Korazin and Bethsaida, woe unto you Capernaum, if the mighty works had been done in Sodom and

Gomorrah that were done in you, they'd have repented. It'll be more tolerable in the judgment for Sodom than for you because of the miracles you saw and didn't believe." He says, you don't need any more. There's enough in the past to be convincing and it's not a question of miracles. It's a question of your own unbelief. And I say the same thing. People they don't need miracles, they just need to understand the word of God. And if they won't believe the word of God, they won't believe miracles either.

Remember the rich man and Lazarus? "Send me back so I can tell my brothers." And what is the word to that man if they do not believe Moses and the prophets, they will not believe til somebody what? Rose from the dead. And you want to know something? Somebody did and they didn't believe and don't. So you see miracles had a limited time, only for the early era, limited persons, only the apostles and prophets and early New Testament preachers, and a limited purpose only for the confirmation of revelation. They were sign posts pointing to God's revelation. First in the living word, then in the written word, and when that was done and recorded it was over folks. Because now that the reality is here, we don't need to sign anymore.

It's a difference between a picture and a person. When somebody goes away, maybe you sent your son to college or moved away somewhere and you take the picture and the picture's there in sentiment and you love the picture. When the son comes home, you don't stand around looking at the picture, you enjoy the son. We don't need to look at the signs any more, we've got the whole thing right here. To allow miracles to keep happening causes all kinds of problems, because then you've got continuing revelation. If you've got continuing revelation, we've got all kinds of people that they're claiming miracles. How do we separate them?

The way that was easy to do in the New Testament was either Christ or His apostles or those working with the apostles and it never got any wider than that. Richard Baxter says, "Since the primary purpose for which miracles are performed in biblical times is no longer operative, it is reasonable to believe that miracles perform through the agency of man as in Bible times no longer are seen on the earth today." I agree. Now remember we're not trying to say God can't do miracles. We're just trying to say that God did some miracles at some periods of time strictly to confirm His word. Strictly as signed gifts for a period of confirmation. They have no place in the ongoing life of the church.

Now four of these gifts are mentioned in the New Testament. As I said, miracles, healings, languages, and interpretation of languages, and they only appear in 1 Corinthians. And the other lists, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4 and other places where it talks about the life of the church, you never hear a thing, you never see a thing, there's never a discussion of these miracle gifts. They had an infancy purpose. All right, what about the gift of miracles. We've talked about the overall category of supernatural ability given to those early men as well as Christ. What about the specific gift of miracles?

1 Corinthians 12, verse 10 talks about the working of miracles. Now what is that? Now, I'm going to say something probably that you never thought about because I never thought about it myself until kind of filtered it through my mind this week. But listen, it talks about the workings of miracles. Now this is very important. The workings of miracles. The word miracles is the Greek word dunamis, which means power. If I had my way, I would translate it that way. That this is the gift of power. The gift of power, supernatural, special power. It's translated in the New Testament power, mighty deeds, strength, miracles. But it's all powerful works and the root in the Greek, Kittlesays, "The root is to be able to do something." It's talking about an ability. It's talking about a power, an energy.

Now that word is used 120 times in the New Testament, so we can't cover all of them. And the verb is used another over 100 times. So it's a very common word, but I want to show you something very, very interesting in reference to what it means. Remember this, the word that is translated miracle, 1 Corinthians 12 is the same exact word as power through the gospels. So let's look at the gospels and see what we can see. Luke 4:13, I'll show you something which to me is just fascinating and very helpful. Luke 4:13 and we've got to hurry. "Jesus beginning His ministry. When the devil had ended all the testing, he departed from Him for a season." Now I want you to notice something. Jesus has just been in conflict with Satan. And they've been going at it and Christ has come out the victor. And when the devil had ended all the testing, the devil had given everything he had to throw at Him. He departed from Him for good. Is that what it says? For just a little while. He was back, real quick. He was back.

Now that's interesting. Now listen to me, the whole life of Jesus was a day by day by day fight with whom? Satan. He was forever fighting Satan, fighting Satan, day after day after day. He was invading the kingdom of darkness in rescuing people. Now notice verse 14. "And Jesus returned," listen to this, "in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." Now I want to show you a connection here. What was it that allowed Jesus to be victorious over Satan? What was it? Power. The power of the Spirit. Notice then that the concept of power is connected with a struggle against Satan. Power as it is in the gospels and you'll see it again and again and again is seen in reference to Christ's conflict with Satan's kingdom.

I'm going to illustrate this to you a lot of ways. Look at Chapter 4, verse 36 as long as you're there. Luke 4:36, this is a man who has a demon and Jesus rebukes the demon and casts him out. And verse 36, "They were all amazed." They were amazed. Why? Because He just threw that demon out. "And spoke among themselves saying what a word is this? With a word He casts out devils." He doesn't have to do the old traditional Jewish exorcism bit. He just says out, and they go. Incredible. "With authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out, excusia and dunamis. He is connected again power with demons over and over and over. Power is the controlling sock that Christ has on the kingdom of Satan.

Let's look at Luke 6:17 and there are so many of these Scriptures. We won't cover them all. "He came down and stood in the plain, the company of disciples, the great multitude of people from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre, and Sidon who came to be healed of diseases." Luke 6:18, "And they that were vexed with unclean spirits and were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him for there went," what, "power out of Him." Where is it again? Power connected with dealing with the kingdom of darkness. Power connected with dealing with the kingdom of darkness.

Back up in your Bible to Mark 1:34. "And He healed many that were sick of diverse diseases and cast out many demons and permitted not the demons to speak because they knew Him." The demons couldn't even speak. In verse 39, it says, "Preached and cast out demons." Now notice this amazing ability to cast out demons is always connected with His preaching. Why? Because the gift of miracles is always connected to the revelation of God. Now I want to take it a step further. In Mark 5, you find the same thing. Jesus exercising great power casting demons out of a demonic or a man demon-possessed who became a maniac. Mark 5, Mark 7, you find it again, verses 24 to 30 or so. Another casting out of demons. And through the ministry of Christ, again and again and again this occurs.

Now I want you to go and you could check Matthew 9:31-33, Matthew 12:22-23, you'll find the same thing there and many other places. But Luke 9:42, I wanna kind of draw it together. Luke 9:42, "And he was coming," this is a father bringing his child, "he was coming the demon threw him down and tore him." This demon just totally controlling this kid. "And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the child and delivered him to his father." Listen, "And they were all amazed or astonished at the," what, "mighty power of God." Now notice this, power is again connected with conflict and victory over Satan's kingdom. This is the gift of powers. You say what are you getting at, John? I'm getting at, I believe, the gift of powers or the gift of miracles was the supernatural and instantaneous ability to cast out demons, primarily.

They have that broader application and I wouldn't limit it as I would limit any of the gifts and their varieties as they're indicated in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, but the primary use of the gift of powers by Christ was in showing that the kingdom of God ruled the kingdom of darkness. And that instantaneous ability to cast Satan out was saying to the world, why would you be a part of that kingdom which I control when I offer you my kingdom?

In Matthew 8:16, it says, "When evening was come, they brought many unto Him possessed with demons. He cast out the spirits with a word." Just a word. I don't know anybody who can do that today. I know nobody in the world, not even the would be Christian exorcist can do that. They go through long sweaty hours of trying to get rid of demons. That is not the apostolic gift of powers or miracles. Jesus with a word cast them out and healed all that was sick. Now there you have the two gifts. The gift of powers and the gift of healing.

And what were they? Jesus could handle demon-induced illness, and He could handle physically induced and congenitally induced illness. I feel the gift of miracles dealt with demonic influence, the gift of healing with physical problems. Two gifts there, miracles related to demon-induced trouble, healing related to physically induced illness. And these seem to be the intentions of these two gifts. And there's some overlap and I wouldn't limit them. The gift that miracles could extend beyond that, but this seems to be its primary thing. You say, well, that's fine for Jesus, but what about the apostles. Is that the same gift they have. Look at Luke 9:1, Luke 9:1. You're going to have to get the tape on this probably to listen again and get all this. Luke 9:1, "And He called His twelve disciples together," and listen, "and gave them," what, what did He give them? "Power," what is the word? Dunamis, same word translated miracle. "Gave them miracles, gave them the gift of miracles and with it comes authority over all demons and to cure diseases."

There you have it. Miracles related to the demons, healing related to the diseases. "And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God." Why? Because these were to confirm their preaching. It doesn't do any good to go around and heal people if you don't open your mouth and say your message from God and have something to corroborate. Look at Luke 10:17, And extended beyond the twelve to the seventy who were personally commissioned by Jesus, and as I said the circle of people who could do this is no wider than Christ, the apostles, and those whom they personally commissioned. Verse 17 of Luke 10, "And the seventy returned," here comes the seventy back after they had been sent out. And they said, Lord, you'll never believe what happened on our trip. We'd like to give you a firsthand report.

Listen to this, "The demons are subject unto us through thine name." We just speak in Your name and the demons leave. They had never seen this, this is brand new stuff folks. This hasn't always been going on and it isn't going on now. This was confirmatory for a certain time. And Jesus said, you should be surprised. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." You think it's any big deal for you to handle those guys? I've booted Satan out of heaven myself. My name will take care of any of his lesser likes.

"And I give you the power to tread on serpents and scorpions and the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Satan may want to use poison against you. He may want to use serpents, but I give you power over the kingdom of darkness. And that's what I see. The gift of powers is the ability to call down Satan. Now you go to Romans 15:19 and Paul says, "I was preaching and through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God," he says, "in dunameinumatōs," "in the dynamite of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit, the miracles of the Spirit, I preach fully the gospel of Christ."

Paul had the gift of powers, the gift of miracles. The ability to deal with Satan and cast out demons. Now people listen, that's instantaneous and with a word and miraculous. And that belongs to Christ,

the apostles, and the few that were touched by their lives. If you read the book of Acts and you'll see the apostles having the ability to do that. It's incredible, instantaneously. And the demons had to respond, there wasn't any choice. But it doesn't work that way nowadays. Stephen, for example, full of faith, Acts 6:8, in power, did wonders and miracles among the people. What does it mean? It means that he showed himself more powerful in the kingdom of God than the kingdom of Satan.

In Acts Chapter 8, verse 7, find it again, unclean spirits leaving in Phillip's ministry. And here you find further what his miracles were, casting out demons. You see that's the connection that I make. You find the same thing in Acts 13. The same thing in Acts 19. The ability to deal with the kingdom of Satan. And this was to be startling. This was to be dramatic. This was to be just something that confirms that they were of God. You say well, if that gift doesn't exist anymore, how do you get rid of demons? How does an unsaved person get rid of demons? How? Does it say go find somebody who can get rid of them for you? It says receive Jesus Christ, right?

How does a Christian get rid of demons? The Bible says, we are to minister to each other. It says reprove one another, rebuke one another, love one another, teach one another, edify one another, pray for one another. Does it say cast demons out of one another? If you've got problems with demons how do you get rid of them? Well, all of the instruction in the New Testament is very clear. And none of it has anything to do with somebody else. Did you know that? You've got to deal with that thing alone with the power of the Holy Spirit. I can't come and get rid of your demon problems.

When you get dealing with the devil, the Bible gets very explicit. It says, for example, in James, "resist the devil and he'll flee from you," right? In Ephesians it says, "take unto you the whole," what, "armor of God." In 2 Corinthians, it says, "don't do anything that'll give Satan the advantage." In 1 Peter 5, it says "remain steadfast so you don't find the devil chewing you up like a roaring lion." In 2 Timothy, it says, "live a pure life so he doesn't have any way to invade you." It's all personalized instruction. Jesus and those earlier apostles to confirm the revelation had the power to do instant complete casting out of demons and other wonders. We don't find any reference to that. There is no reference in the entire New Testament Epistles to having a Christian cast demons out of another Christian, to having a Christian exorcise demons out of another one. All is personal word to a believer that he himself has Satan under his feet. Right? Romans 16 says, and all you have to do to deal with the devil is put on the armor, that's all.

I was reading this fellow who is supposedly America's number one demon caster out, and he says he even has problems and some of them won't go. Well, then he doesn't have the gift. Do you think if Jesus cast them out they wouldn't go? Guess again. It's not the same thing. People say, well, if they don't have...if you don't allow for miracles, MacArthur, how will people believe? Miracles have never been the issue about people believing. Jesus fed 25,000 people on a hillside and He did miracles all day long. Before that they followed Him to the other side and He said to them, you didn't come here because of who I am or what I did, you come here because you want more food.

That's right. Lazarus rose from the dead, pretty shocking. You know what happened? The Jews got mad and killed Jesus over it. In Acts 14, Paul came in and healed a crippled man, an impotent man, marvelous healing. And everybody said fantastic and you read on down to verse 19 and it says they had a little group, got together, and decided to stone him, and they stoned him and threw him out of the city dead. That's how great an effect...great revival. Miracles never were the reason people got saved. People get saved because God gives faith in their hearts.

Apostles never evangelized through miracles. They evangelized through the preaching of the word. The miracles only confirmed the word, and once the word is done, the miracles have no reason to be. Incidentally, they'll appear once again in the future when all the Christians are gone and the world is void of any witness. And then the two witnesses pop up and there will be some miracle then. But in the meantime, miracles have not occurred since 100 A.D., as the norm in the life of the church because God isn't revealing His word anymore. It's done. All Scripture is inspired by God and it's all complete, but the man of God may be, what? Thoroughly furnished. You don't need any more than that.

So, you say, but John what about all these miracles that people claim? Look, I don't have to answer that. I can show from the word of God this isn't a miracle age. But you say there's miracles throughout all history. Sure, and you want to hear something interesting? For the years after the church there were no miracles until Roman Catholicism started getting started. And when the Roman church started getting started, all of a sudden miracles and miracles started happening. Well, the only thing we can conclude if we're going to believe in miracles is that God was confirming the fact that the Roman church was His true church and that was His revelation. You say well, what were the miracles?

Oh, there were really amazing miracles. For example in 415, they found the bones of Stephen. And the bones were taken to Africa and everywhere they went miracles happened. Do you believe that? The bones of Stephen? 415 years after Stephen died? Hardy bones. A merchant in one town stole the arm of John the Baptist which was preserved in a shrine. And as long as he kept it in his closet he got rich. And as soon as somebody found it and took it away, he became a beggar. Good luck charm, the arm of John the Baptist. Do you realize that in the early years of the forming of the Roman church Christians preserved feather droppings from the wings of Gabriel when he came to announce to Mary the birth of Jesus?

Pilgrim monks came back and boasted that they had been Jerusalem had seen the real finger of the Holy Spirit. The churches of the saints Cosmas and Damian at Rome exhibited a miracle working vial of the breast milk of the virgin Mary. And that became such a popular miracle worker, that in France the church...and I listed 20 names, 20 different churches had bottles of Mary's breast milk to do miracles with. They even said it wasn't necessarily the milk which was...which the virgin used to

nourish the infant. But that she through all the ages had continued to nourish her children in times of deadly need, and that even her statues and paintings would give milk at certain times to certain saints. That's weird.

And this milk was a miracle milk. Bernard of Clarevoe said that he was rewarded for his holy life by Mary visiting him in his cell and letting his lips be moistened by the food of the heavenly child he said. Mary nursed Bernard of Clarevoe in his cell. Incredible. And all...people all you see...having stigmatizations, you know, all of a sudden popping up with the signs of the cross in their hands and their feet and bleeding like St. Francis supposedly did and so forth. Miracles were going on all over the place and magical things and crazy things. One saint Pantelian had had so much of Mary's milk that he had drunk in his life that when he died and they cut him open out of his veins came blood and milk and they caught it in a vial and it used to switch places and when the blood was on top, the country had a bad year. And when the milk was on top it had a good year.

Apparitions of Mary were occurring all over the world at places like Guadalupe and these great shrines of Mary supposedly apparitions of Mary. I was in Guadalupe and she appeared to some Indians and at Lourdes and so forth and so on. Was God confirming Roman Catholicism? Was God confirming all this by these ridiculous things? And what about today when they tell us that in Indonesia God made porridge and God made food for all these people at a party. And I read things like that and I can't believe my ears. And then comes along a book like *Like A Mighty Wind* and everybody believes it. And since that time there have been at least four or five articles totally discrediting all of that as a lot of bologna.

Evangelical church from the post-New Testament era on has to operate this way. And I believe this, we are to walk by what? Faith and not by sight and people who are always running around wanting more and more miracles, give evidence of the most infantile faith, if it's faith at all. Sure the counterfeits go on. There are counterfeit miracles all the time. Christian science has them for years. The occult has them, the pagans have them, the charismatics have them, and they're all over the place. So much so that if God did something, you wouldn't hardly be able to find out in the midst of all the mess. That gift had a unique purpose. Its purpose was to confirm the revelation of God. And beloved, the revelation is finished. And just like the first 30 years of Jesus' life, there was no reason to do miracles. The next three there were and through the years of the early church, there's no reason to assume that miracles have to go on and on and on and on and on and on.

People who say oh we have faith in miracles don't have faith, they have doubt looking for proof. Well, I feel like I kind of scatter-gunned at you this morning, but I...and I don't have an ax to grind and I'm not down on any group of people. And I love all the brothers and sisters in Christ. I just feel sometimes that as strongly as other things are said, so strongly do we need to say what we believe the Bible teaches. I trust you understand that.

Father, thank You for giving us the time this morning to talk about some of these things and we just barely scratched the surface of what has to be a very important subject. We're not denying You power at all. That would be stupid. You are powerful, but You also are consistent and You exhibit Your power in most consistent ways. And one of them is by showing us the purpose of Your miracles, the purpose of Your power. We don't see miracles all the time around us. The world goes on in a very natural way, and that's the way You've made it. Help us to understand that when miracles did occur, they did have a very direct purpose and in the future when they occur in the tribulation and the kingdom age, they'll have a unique purpose then. But help us to know that that which was established by miracles Your word, and that which is loaded with miracles for our study and rejoicing is sufficient to be the test of any man's message. Help us to go out and boldly preach what has already been revealed and to walk by faith and not by sight. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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