***The Gift of Miracles
RO156-02***

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Please open your Bible to Romans 12:3-8. Our subject is "Service of the Body," and this is segment number eight.

**Spiritual Gifts**

The believers of the present church age are described by God as forming a spiritual body similar to the human body. The individual believers make up the different parts of this spiritual body. The head of the spiritual body is Jesus Christ. The church in Scripture is called the body of Christ. The body of Christ is commissioned by God to fulfill His plan on earth. This includes proclaiming the gospel of salvation to lost sinners, and teaching believers the doctrines of Scripture for their growth to spiritual maturity. This divine mission for the local church believer is executed through a variety of spiritual gifts, or abilities, which are possessed by each Christian. These spiritual gifts are bestowed by the Holy Spirit at the point when a person trusts in Christ to save him. The various spiritual gifts enable the local church to function as a body in God's service.

**Temporary Spiritual Gifts**

Some spiritual gifts were only in operation while the church was being established after the Pentecost, and while the New Testament Scriptures were being written. Among these temporary gifts were the gifts of apostle; prophets; the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; discerning of spirits; miracles; healing; tongues; and, the interpretation of tongues. If you hear anybody today claiming to have these gifts, you know that is a false prophet. If you hear anybody proclaiming that Christians can possess these special abilities, you know that he is a false teacher, and you should put distance between yourself and that person. Unfortunately, Satan is having a field day with temporary spiritual gifts that people are chasing like rabbits that can never be caught.

**Permanent Spiritual Gifts**

Satan encourages immature, and doctrinally disoriented Christians, to pursue these temporary gifts, even, as a matter of fact, for them to pretend that they possess them when obviously they do not. There are, however, gifts in operation. They're the only ones which are used by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the plan of God for the body of Christ here on earth. These are evangelists; pastor-teacher; ministry; teaching; exhortation; giving; administration; mercy; and, faith. It is important, I think obviously, for a Christian to identify his spiritual gift or gifts. You at least have one. Most of you probably have more than one.

**Identifying Spiritual Gifts**

In order to identify one's spiritual gift, there are certain steps you may take. One: you have to decide, first of all, that you do want to live your life according to God's plan for your life. Secondly, you have to know what the Bible teaches concerning the doctrine of spiritual gifts, so that you'll understand what is out there, and what is not out there for you. Third, you obviously need to pray for divine guidance so that you will recognize what you are good at in God's service. And fourth, you do have to have an interest in ministering with a particular gift. God would not give you a spiritual gift to do something you just hate to do. And fifth, the gift should be confirmed by other Christians who observe you in action and say, "Yes, you do have the capacity to minister in that way."

**Evidenced of Fruitfulness**

There is one final guideline to identifying your spiritual gifts, and it is not the least by any means. And that is the evidence of Fruitfulness in serving with a spiritual gift to identify that you really do have that gift. If you have it, all other things being equal (you are filled with the Spirit, and operating on biblical principles) your gifts will be productive. It is the purpose of God that we be fruitful in our service. It is the purpose of God that our spiritual gift will accomplish His purpose in the body of Christ. And fruitfulness is what He has in mind for us. This is indicated to us in John 15:8, where we read, "In this," Jesus says, "is My Father glorified: that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples." People who are disciples of Jesus Christ are people who are operating on a spiritual gift which the Spirit of God has given them, and which Jesus Christ is administering, and which God the Father is bringing fruitfulness from. Therefore, the gift, having fruitfulness, is fulfilling the purpose of God.

**Geographic Location**

Now, you may actually possess a spiritual gift from which there is no fruitfulness. You do have the gifts, but you are unproductive. And it is important that these be called your attention, because this is largely the case for many, many Christians. They have a spiritual capacity, but they are unfruitful for certain reasons. Number one: you may be unfruitful in using your spiritual gifts in the wrong geographic location. God not only gives you a gift, but God the Holy Spirit decides where you're going to use the gift. It is not left in your hands to decide where you are going to live on the face of the earth, and where you are going to serve God on the face of the earth. That is not your privileged decision. That is in the hands of God, and He makes that decision.

**Taking the Gospel into Europe**

Acts 16:6 indicates to us one occasion when the apostle Paul was planning to use his gift as an apostle in a place that was geographically the wrong place. It was not the place chosen by the Spirit of God. Acts 16:6: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit allowed them not." So, Paul had gone in two directions. Both times, the Spirit of God said, "Wrong. Stop." Paul turned and went in another direction. The Spirit of God said, "Wrong place. Stop." Now, Paul could have barged ahead, and he could have tried to use his spiritual gift, but it would not have been fruitful.

Verse 8 says, "And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia beseechingly him and saying, 'Come over into Macedonia and help us.' And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel until them." So, here you have the record of Paul attempting to go to other regions of Asia, and the Lord saying, "That's the wrong place. The time has come to take the gospel into Europe. So, the geographic location was Macedonia. Paul was now to cross over from Asia into Europe, and begin what became the most fruitful, productive use of his spiritual gifts that had ever been his experience up to that time.

Paul responded to the leading of the Holy Spirit; he ended up in the right place; and, he had a fruitful ministry. This is a hazard which is very great for us Christians today, because today we live in a mobile society. We also live in a society of maverick Christians who go church-hopping. We have erratic Christians. They move from church to church. When they're looking for kicks, and fun and games, they're practically useless, and they're most assuredly fruitless. God says, "I have a right place for you to use your gift. I have a right church for you to minister through. I have a right ministry for you to be under. And if you're in the wrong place, it will work against you. Moving around on the face of the earth has to be governed, for a Christian, by something more than the job you're chasing; more than the economic benefits you will accrue; more than the climate you'd like to live in; and, more than just because you got mad about something.

**Erratic Use of Spiritual Gifts**

Secondly, Christians are untruthful with their spiritual gifts because they are erratic in their use of their gifts. A Christian service is called to a lifetime of full-time Christian service. And in the process of that lifetime of full-time Christian service, you may have to work under adverse, difficult situations. Now, you can either knuckle under, and quit operating, and sit around feeling sorry for yourself in an orgy of self-pity, or you can pick up the problem and go forward with it; resolve it; and, keep fighting. You keep fighting, or you collapse. If you collapse, the fruitfulness of your spiritual gift will go down with you.

The apostle Paul understood this very well. Notice an example of this in Philippians 1:15. Paul says, "Some of you preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. Paul says, "I found an interesting situation here in Rome. I have found that there are Christians who are coordinating efforts to help me in what I'm doing as a genuine apostle of God, bringing the message of church truth to the center of the Roman Empire. But there are other Christians (would you believe it – in this city?), who are also indeed preaching the gospel, but they're doing it in competition with me. They're doing it to outdo me in some respect or another. Paul says, "That's OK with me." In verse 18, he says, "The gospel is being preached. Their motivation is not the best, but the truth is there, and I'm gratified for it." But it did hurt him. It made him sad that this is the way he was being treated when he had enough troubles as it was, as a prisoner of Rome.

Notice Philippians 1:25-26: "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance joy of faith, that you're rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Paul has (in the verses immediately before – verse 25) said, "The Lord has given me good news. Nero is going to free me. They're not going to execute me. And I will be able to come back to visit you in the city of Philippi, and I look forward to that." So, Paul is indicating, "Yes, I've fallen upon hard times. I'm still using my spiritual gifts. Some people in Rome are making it hard, but I'm looking forward to the time when I'm going to exercise my gifts in Philippi because God says that He's going to let me work there as well."

Once a spiritual gift, then, is identified, you as a Christian are obligated to keep it in action. Now, indeed, as your life moves along, you're not able to do all the things you could do in earlier days when you had capacity. And hopefully, you were smart enough to use your capacity when you had it. Deuteronomy 33:25 puts it in terms of saying, "As your days, so shall your strength be." That was the principle that the Lord explained to Moses, and it was a principle that applies to us today. But you don't quit serving even though you might have to serve in a little less capacity.

**Demas**

A couple of very bad examples of this fruitlessness from erratic use of a gift is, of course, Demas, in 2 Timothy 4:10, where Paul sadly looks back upon a man who was once highly esteemed as a member of his team. Paul says, "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has department to Thessalonica." So, Demas is one of those who was born again, and had a spiritual gift, and got attracted to big-time living, and to the big-time centers of the ancient world, and decided after a while to cut out; leave Paul; and, go work the world's system. That saddened Paul because he understood that Demas was doing that, and it was his privilege to do that. It's your freedom, and you are your own priest. And we have plenty of Christians. Some of them used to sit right here with us. They're off, drifting around in the world, living like slobs and dogs, thinking that they're up in the big-time, enjoying all the things of life that they've accumulated. But how sad it will be, one day, when they see what has happened to them, and the price they pay at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Demas was an erratic user of his spiritual gift.

**John Mark**

Of course, John Mark was another one. Acts 12:12 tells us, "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered praying together." John Mark had a mother who was apparently well-off financially. Her home became a center of activity, and therefore, her son was somewhat in prominence among the believers. He went with Paul on the first missionary journey. After they got started, he decided this was too tough, and he cut out. On the second missionary journey, Paul refused to take Mark. The contention with Barnabas, who was related to Mark, was so great that the two men split company, and both went in different directions with their own teams.

Words of appreciation for consistency of many of you here in the Berean ministry are certainly in order. And I have had, interestingly enough, recently, several times (not just once, but several times) people who have children, and have been related with us over the years, and have been away and come back. They say, "This really is amazing. I've been gone for all this time. Now I come back, and I see the same people. They're still working. They're still serving. Your church is still doing what needs to be done for people. The Word of God is still available. You just keep doing it." Well, that's a great compliment. I understand what they're saying. They're saying, "You have people who are not erratic in the use of their spiritual gifts." And like one lady recently said, "You still do it even if there aren't a bunch of people there who want to benefit." Right. That's God's business – not ours. Our business is to make it worthwhile every time you attend anything we sponsor.

I can assure you we do our best to do just that. Anybody who doesn't attend something that we sponsor is almost inevitably the poorer for his choice that has been poorly made – erratic use of one's gift. Thank God for people who stay on the job.

**The Wrong Situation**

Then there's a third problem that undermines your fruitfulness, and that is a spiritual gift operating in a wrong situation. I have seen so many Christians who get enamored for wanting to work in a certain area of the ministry. They just think that's a glamorous, glorious place to be, and it's not one that they are suited for, or the particular kind of spiritual gift they have is not the kind that should be applied in that segment. They may have the gift of teaching, but they want to teach in a wrong place. The Lord Jesus Christ, I remind you, we have been told, determines the area in God's vineyard where we use our spiritual gift. He makes the decision where we serve. Therefore, we are not to wander all over the place, trying to make that decision on our own. The wrong application of your gift will neutralize its effectiveness. And the results will not be there. It is a very grave mistake for you to equate prominence you may have in a local church, or the praise that you may receive for what you do – to equate that with the fact that you are being fruitful in God's eyes. That's bad judgment. People may think that you're the cat's meow; the cat's whiskers; or, the cat's paw (whatever is nicest on a cat), and that puts you in the highest position of esteem. People may have a great deal of praise for you. That doesn't mean that God shares their opinion. You have to use your gift in the right situation.

**Using your Gift for your Personal Glory**

The next counterproductive thing is using your gift for your personal glory. That should be self-evident. The old sin nature in all of us has a lust for praise; a lust for recognition; and, a lust for thanks-yous. It's just a lust for appreciation. And that motivates many believers in their Christian service. So, if somebody does not come along and thank you for a service that you have done, then you have lost your motivation for doing it next time. What difference does it make whether somebody thanks you, or praises you, or commends you? If God thanks you, and praises you, and commends you, then that makes a difference. People and what they think, and how they may react, as nice as that may be isn't the thing that really counts. And it's easy to fall into the mistake of using your spiritual gift, especially one of those natural abilities that you have that God has giving you also the gift of ministry with, and you put your natural ability under His gift of ministering, and you can produce tremendous things – that natural ability that is very impressive, you just might fall into the trap of thinking that you are really something special. Once you get on the glory road, your fruitfulness is going to be undermined.

In 3 John, we read about a man named Diotrephes. Diotrephes undoubtedly was a man who knew something about spiritual things in the church of the New Testament Times. But he was a man who got caught up in wanting to be Mr. Big in the local congregation. In 3 John 9, therefore, we read (John says), "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them received us not." Diotrephes had become such an arrogant character that he was even undermining the messages and the communications from, of all people, the apostle John himself. But John says, "I'm putting him on notice. He is not a fruitful Christian. He is hindering the work of the Lord. He is undermining Christians. And when I get there, he and I are going to knock heads.

Verse 10: "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds, which he does, prating against us with malicious words, and not content with that; neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church." I mean, this was Mr. Arrogance (Mr. Big) He was in a controlling position where he could even throw people out of the congregation, and he was carrying on with malicious attacks upon the apostle John. This is an example of somebody who wants to create a success story so that he wows the congregation. And the result is that, in the process, he gets his glory, and he loses his fruitfulness. Like the Lord said about the Pharisees, who used to put on their big-man shows, the Lord said that they got their reward: the praise of people; and, the awe of people, but they're getting nothing from God.

Philippians 2:3-4: "Let nothing be done in strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." So, the Word of God says, "Don't try to serve for personal glory. But recognize that you're part of the team, and a lot of the glory belongs to the other believers."

**Using your Gift Apart from Spiritual Leadership**

The next thing to undermine your fruitfulness is the desire to use your spiritual gift apart from the guidance of the local church spiritual leadership. Many a Christian has fallen into fruitlessness. They are the Christians who say (and I cannot tell you how many times I've heard this expression), "Well, if I do that, I want it understood that I'm in charge." What are they telling us? That's not the Spirit of God the Holy Spirit. That's the spirit from the sin nature. They're telling us that they're fully self-contained individuals, and they don't need any spiritual direction, and they don't want anybody butting in with their superior insights. That kind of an attitude usually produces Christian service which is actually destructive to the Lord's work, I've observed, and it is detrimental to believers.

Hebrews 13:17 gives us God's pattern for doing the work in the local ministry, and that is to be coordinated under the guidance of the local church leadership: "Obey them that have the rule over you in the local church ministry, and submit yourselves. For they watch for yourselves as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.

**Confusing a Natural Ability with a Spiritual Gift**

The final cause of ruthlessness is confusing a natural ability with a spiritual gift. Natural abilities are governed by changing fads and interests, and you impose your strong natural talent on God's people, and you call it Christian service. That's counterproductive to divine good. Natural abilities outside of the gift of ministering distracts a Christian from real fruitfulness in spiritual things. And when we say fruitfulness, we mean divine good production that God recognizes, and for which He brings us rewards.

That, in general, summarizes the spiritual gifts. We should point out that there is a very specific purpose for spiritual gifts that would avoid making the mistakes that lead to unfruitfulness. First of all, to glorify Jesus Christ. In John 16:14, we have this specified to us. Why do you have a spiritual gift? To glorify Christ: "He (God the Holy Spirit) shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Anything that you do that is under the guidance of the Spirit of God is going to glorify Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came after the ascension of Jesus Christ to guide believers in service which glorifies the Lord. A ministry which is produced by your sin nature does not glorify Christ. And it does not evidence that a spiritual gift is in operation.

**To Glorify Christ**

Christian service, or the spiritual gift, is not going to build a reputation to glorify you while you use your spiritual gift. Colossians 1:18 makes it clear that there's only one preeminent person in this universe, and that's Jesus Christ. He is to have the preeminence. So, it is very important that you be aware of the fact of how you go about serving the Lord. Don't be a primadonna. We have plenty of those in the Christian community, and we don't need any more primadonnas parading around. God says that He (Christ) is the One. That's the only primadonna we have in the universe. Colossians 1:18: "He is the head of the body (speaking of Jesus) of the church, Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things, He might have the preeminence." So, the first purpose of a spiritual gift to stay on track is that you use it to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

**To Edify the Body of Christ**

The second purpose is also very clear in Scripture, and that is to edify the body of Christ; that is, to build up other Christians spiritually. 1 Corinthians 14:12 indicates that when it says, "Even so, you, for as much as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek you may excel to the edifying of the church." Please remember that no spiritual gift was ever given to a believer for self-edification. There is a lot of false-prophet teaching on that, and that is totally without foundation in Scripture. You do not have a spiritual gift for your own edification. A spiritual gift is for the edification of other people. So, it is to edify the body of Christ, and to build them up in spiritual maturity for spiritual combat preparation. The user of the gift profits, indeed, in terms indeed of the rewards he receives. But it is not for his personal benefit. It enables the believers to gain the capacity for serving God and to enjoy His blessing when you use your spiritual gift.

The third purpose of spiritual gifts is to enable the church to function as a body (as a unit). 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ" – speaking about the body of Christ being formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the point of your salvation. As soon as you trust in Christ, you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places you in Christ.

Notice 1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular." You are placed in the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, you sit in church, and somebody gets up and says (as I've often sat in church and heard this): "How many of you would like to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" Please put up your hands. And then they proceed to go through a rigmarole to bring them the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If you ever hear somebody say that, you should get goosebumps all over, because you are now in the presence of the devil – one of the greatest false doctrines he has ever perpetrated.

If you read 1 Corinthians 12:13, you don't need to have any more explanation to know that this baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place automatically, at the point of salvation, to every believer. And it is for the purpose of enabling us to function as a body. Various spiritual gifts enable the local church to do its job. They enable the local believers to work as an operational unit. It is self-evident that the human body needs all of its parts, and it needs different parts (Paul has already pointed that out), in order for it to maximize its effectiveness. It is these spiritual gifts that help us to function as a body. Furthermore, it is these spiritual gifts which are basically the weapons of our spiritual warfare.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 point this out: "For those we walk in the flesh, we do not war or do battle after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but might through God to the pulling down of strongholds." What are those weapons? Our spiritual gifts: "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to be obedient to Christ; and having a readiness to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled," and so on. This passage makes very clear that God has provided us with spiritual gifts to enable the body to function, and they are the weapons of our warfare.

**Miracles**

Now, I'm reluctant to leave this subject without touching upon one of the greatest abuses of the truth of spiritual gifts that's in operation today. If you listen to the TV religious leaders, or you listen to radio, you know that the greatest con game (the biggest money-making game) with the religious world today is people pursuing miracles. So, I'd like to tie this up today by, once more, reviewing the basic temporary gift of miracles – a gift which no longer is in existence. There are none of you here today who has the gift of miracles. There's is not a one of you who could stand up and perform a miracle for us. Some of you appear to be a miracle to us as we observe you. You are a wonder, indeed. But you are not a sign of anything; at least, not of anything good. There are no miracle-workers among us.

However, indeed, in the New Testament church, there were miracles. 1 Corinthians 12:10 points that out. Here is one of those places listing of spiritual gifts: "To another, the working of miracles." The word "miracles" there looks like this in the Greek Bible: "dunamis." The word "dunamis" means "miracle." It is a word that is associated with power. It is power which is of a supernatural character. It is a force which is beyond natural laws of the universe. It is something that can override a natural law. Jonah, swallowed by this huge fish, was not really, strictly speaking, a miracle. Perhaps his survival in that fish could be categorized as a miracle. But I have heard that that has happened to sailors, and they have survived, and actually been able to get back out of the thing that swallowed them.

However, a miracle is overriding a natural law that suddenly is totally disrupted. Now that takes great power. This word "working" here in 1 Corinthians ("the working of a miracle") – this other word is the Greek word "energema." This is the word that stresses the effects that are produced by a certain power. There is a power beyond man's capacity that produces an effect that we describe as a miracle – a work of great power.

**A Sign**

Now the Bible makes it very clear that the point of miracles was for them to be a sign. And it uses this Greek word: "semeion." Notice Mark 16:20 to illustrate this point. Why were miracles in existence in the New Testament church? "And they (the Christians) went forth and preached everywhere; the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following" (with "semeion" following). What was the purpose of the miracle? Clearly, this verse says, "God gave miracles in the New Testament church to confirm the truth of what was being taught by the early Christians. This was the regular divine purpose for miracles throughout history.

2 Corinthians 12:12 indicates that: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience and signs and wonders and mighty deeds." What was God doing when He gave apostles these special miracle powers to confirm the message? That was the point – so that the people would know that what these early Christian leaders were telling them was indeed from God, and that they were not something they were making up.

Notice also Hebrews 2:3-4. "How shall we escape if we neglect so grace salvation; which salvation, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" Who was that? The apostles: "God also, bearing them witness (bearing witness to what the apostles were saying), both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." Now I think that with those Scriptures that you should be able to see that the only purpose of a miracle is to confirm a message from God. That's all. And when you get some con artists on television, or on radio, telling you that God is waiting to give you a miracle, and if you will send in an offering, that miracle will be on the way, that is a blasphemy. That is a horrid, terrible blasphemy, and a distortion of the Word of God. That is not just a false prophet.

That is a message from Satan himself, because the devil has a problem with miracles. Miracles confirmed all that was said against him. It confirmed that God was speaking and destroying the kingdom of Satan. It is miracles that confirm that, on the cross, the battle between Jesus Christ and Satan had been lost by Satan and won by Christ. And Satan has done everything he can do, through the centuries, to dissipate the impact of miracles. And what better way than to give the idea that this is just candy-store stuff that you can hand out. When you listen to the preachers on TV, you know that they're saying, "Here's a big candy store of miracles. Come in, and pick a wonder." And the people come in and say, "Give me two of those. That's good. I'll have three of those." And all you have to do is ask and pick, and then you do something. Usually what you have to do is send money in. You have to send your offering in to this cause – whatever the cause is. It is some kind of work of God that is being carried on. Who knows what and where? But you send your money in, and you get your miracle.

That is so gross, and that is so low, that any sensitive Christians just regurgitates mentally that idea. And certainly, as I've shown you from Scripture, that was never the purpose of miracles – some kind of kicks that you could get by paying the price. It was to confirm the message from God. Where is that message now? Do we need to have miracles to confirm that God is talking to us now? No, because the message is written in Scripture. The New Testament has recorded the message that God has for us. It was this New Testament message that the miracles were confirming.

So, the fact of original confirmation is all we need. You do not need to read the book of Ephesians, and have a miracle to confirm that is true. We already have been told that what we have recorded in the book of Ephesians has been confirmed by a miracle in the presence of those who received this message.

So, what I'm saying is that there isn't anybody today who is capable of instantaneous miracles being performed through the power of God, such as healing or any other miracle. Furthermore, I'm telling you that there is nobody today who is a channel of miraculous powers. When Oral Roberts tells you to put a glass of water on your television set, and that he is going to now fill it with the power of God, and then when he’s through, he tells you to drink it, he's a liar. He's a false prophet. And he has done that many times. And some of you have sold your glass, for all I know. And you have come up empty. All you've come up with is that you're a little wetter and the inside than you were before. You are probably a little wetter between the ears to have put that up there in the first place.

We sometimes have one of these local yocals who tells you, as I watched him put out his hand to the television camera that's shooting him, and he says, "Now put your hand on your television screen. I feel the power of God coming through my hand. Oh, it's there." So, you put your hand there. And he says, "Now I'm going to transmit it as soon as you send in your $100." I mean, how dumb do you have to be? Worse than that, how gross and blasphemous do you have to be as an individual to play that con game, because you know that the promise of miracles is very attractive to the sin nature? And even Christians will flood the place with money because they want the miracle.

One of our ladies on the campout was saying that there's a lady who goes to the big-time charismatic church in Irving. And she's had her little girl in our school, and in our clubs. The kid is a really a terrific little kid. And this mother is all up in the charismatic movement. And she says, "You know, it's really amazing. Year-after-year, I've watched Berean church just goes on doing God's work. She said, I've never seen a concentrated group of dedicated people. They're dedicated to God's work." She said, "I sit in this huge church here on the highway, and these people are not dedicated. They're just there." Do you know why they're there> I know why they're there. They're there to get a miracle. They're there to get an emotional experiential kick. That's all they're interested in.

We ran a banquet one time, and inadvertently had a man who spoke about satanism, who was out of a satanist cult. He was a powerful man. He was capable, as a satanist leader in Northern California of lifting a grand piano over his head, and putting it down, to demonstrate that he had power from Satan. This man had been genuinely born-again. But as so often happens, people who are in touch with the occult, when they become Christians, drift off into the charismatic movement, which is a kissing cousin of the occult. So, he was into that movement. We really didn't know that he had that background. But when the word got out that he was going to be our banquet speaker, lo and behold, this parking lot was filled with cars. People were coming in that we never saw. They were coming into the banquet, and our men were trying to handle the buying of tickets, and going around the tables. They were trying to collect tickets as it happened. And these people came in. They did not have tickets. They ate the meal. And we had about 30 or 40 dinners that nobody ever paid for. And some of the people that had paid for meals from our group couldn't even get a meal, because these people got first in line, and managed their way around. And they didn't pay for the dinner. Wonderful charismatics were here to hear one of their own who was out of the occult. They weren't there to be dedicated, or even to pay the price of a meal. All they were there was for the kicks; the emotional orgy; and, the experience of what they considered miracles.

You should be aware of the fact that there is something very gross about somebody who's tapping the lucrative mother lode of miracles that people seek because the miracles are always associated with pouring money into the miracle operators' so-called ministry. Does this mean that God doesn't perform miracles today? Of course He does. This mean that He cannot perform miracles? No, it does not. He can do that, and he does. But the power of God does not flow through any individual Christian. And these characters who are claiming that are liars from the word "go."

If Christians could curse somebody in heaven, these religious leaders that are in such prominence today, and who are drawing in vast sums of money, that could really do something good in God's work – if Christians could, they would have cursed them readily at the Judgment Seat of Christ, when people realize how much these people have cost them.

**Miracles Cycle in History**

Here's the background you should be aware of on miracles. Miracles throughout history come in cycles. We've already shown you that miracles are only used by God to confirm the message from God. That's all. It's not a candy-store fun game.

**Moses**

Secondly, miracles cycle in and out of human history. Someone could ask you: who was the first miracle worker recorded in the Bible? Your answer would have to be Moses. This is the occasion of displaying great miraculous power from God for the explicit purpose of confirming, first of all, to the Jewish people. Moses said, "Why are they going to listen to me? I'm coming in and I'm saying, 'God has sent me to lead you out of Egypt into freedom.'" God said, "Use your staff. Throw it down." He threw it down, and the thing became a snake." And Moses runs. The Lord says, "Come on back, Moses. It's OK. Pick this thing up by the tail." So, Moses gingerly picks it up by the tail, and it turns back into his staff. Moses says, "How did you do that? That's good." God says, "Pharaoh will be impressed too."

So, what's the point? Well, first he had to convince the Jews. So, he did. He went to them, and performed this miracle, and God gave him a couple of other miracles. And the Jews believed him. They said, "Nobody can do this. You have confirmed to us that God has sent you." He did the same before Pharaoh to confirm that he was speaking for the true God. And the miracles were to authenticate the message of Moses. We don't have time today to pursue the Scriptures. And that's a pity. You should run these down yourself, because when you read them in Scripture, you see how consistently God ties together the miracle with authentication of the message. The miracles proved that the spokesman was from God. Miracles proved that the words were true. That's where the miracle is tied in. And these were the kind of miracles that were distinctly those that only God can perform.

I'll give you the Scriptures. Exodus 4:3-9. Compare that with Exodus 4:29-31. These were miracles to authenticate the message of Moses. These were also to authenticate the message to Pharaoh: Exodus 7:8-10; Exodus 7:19-20; and, Exodus 8:5-6. The miracles of Moses also attested to the Egyptian people the supreme power of the God of the Israelites over against their animal gods: Exodus 7:3-5: "My signs" and "My wonders" were the words that God used to Moses, stressing that these were not from Moses, but these were from God. Moses did not feel any electricity popping through him like Oral Roberts' son describes popping through him when he feels a miracle power coming upon him. Moses simply did what God told him to do. There were no sparks; there was no electricity; and, there were no feelings of heat or anything of that nature.

However, as the Scripture said, the Egyptians would know that here was a power that was beyond what their magicians could do. Satan always wants to use miracles to neutralize the message of God by coming along with counterfeit miracles. And you might want to read through Exodus 7:11-12; Exodus 7:22; and, Exodus 8:7. They, at first, actually did produce the same miracles that Moses did. They were able to throw down a staff, and it turned into a snake. Now what they did was not give life to a stick, as God was doing, but what they did was an illusion. It was probably a real snake that they had hypnotized, or that they had immobilized in some way, so that it looked like a staff. It was rigid like a staff.

I showed the kids on our campout (our trip taken years ago) to Florida, with one of our youth trip camps. And they had the sequence where the man was in the pen with all the alligators. And he had this one alligator, and he flipped him over, and I said, "Now watch. He's going to hypnotize that thing." And he gets on that alligator's stomach, and he rubs it in a certain way, and that thing just went rigid. And he just pushed it around like it was a stick.

The Egyptian magicians did something of that nature. And the evidence of this was that when Moses threw his stick down, that had become the snake, and the magicians threw their snake that then became active, Moses' snake went over and gobbled them down.

Now, have you ever seen a snake eat? On one of our campouts recently, I sat and watched a snake eat the lizard. They don't gobble. They gulp their food down a little bit. And their jaws open here. And they open them, and they bite, and they gulp it down. And gradually, the last thing I say was his tail going in. I said, "How did you do that? That was fascinating."

But when Moses's snake ate, he just whoofed those guys down, just as fast as he could gobble them. That was a miracle in itself. They did the old water-into-blood trick. But the thing that threw them off was when Moses created life out of inert material. That stopped the magicians dead. When he turned dust into the life, the magicians tried it, and they shook their heads because the one thing Satan do is create life (Exodus 8:18-19). This is a fascinating area of God's limitations upon the workings of Satan. So, for the whole 40-year period that Moses led these people in the wilderness, Acts 7:36 tells us that he continued to perform miracles in the course of confirming to them that God is really in what they are doing.

So, after they got to the Promised Land, what happened? There were no more miracles. Centuries go by without another miracle. Isn't that significant? There were no more candy stores being open. The Jews themselves did not expect the miracles to continue. The message had been confirmed; the mission had been executed; and, miracles stopped. We come down to the time of Jezebel and Ahab. The people of Israel are in enormous spiritual disorientation and apostasy. And suddenly, there's an outburst of miracles. The Pentecostalists today insist (and the charismatics insist) that everything that happened in the New Testament church is the same today, including miracles. The Jewish people did not believe that. They understood that miracles or signs of confirmation.

**Elijah**

So, we come to the period of Elijah. There's a time of great spiritual apostasy under Ahab and Jezebel. You can read about that in 1 Kings 16:30-33, 1 Kings 18:4, and 1 Kings 18:17-18. And again, you will see that the whole thing is tied back to the fact that the Word of God was now discarded and rejected. In 1 Kings 18:20-21, you have a statement by Elijah to the Jews when he called for a confrontation with Baal. He says, "You people decide who it is you are going to serve. If our God is the true God, then serve Him; and, if Baal is God, then you serve him. What are you going to do?" And the Bible says, "They answered him not a word." Now, how's that for a response from your congregation? You would have thought that they'd said, "Hey, God is God." No. They were so far out that they did not make that statement.

So, along comes Elijah with the miracles. And this was purely again for confirmation. 1 Kings 17:1 said that there will be no dew or rain until Elijah says. In 1 Kings 17:2-6, God supplies food to take care of his prophet Elijah while the famine is on. In 1 Kings 17:14-16, Elijah is living with a widow who has a small cruse of oil and a little bit of meal (flour). He asks her for a drink of water, and he said, "Would you give me a piece of bread?" She says, "I haven't enough. I'm going to make one more meal, and then my son and I are going to die." The TV con men love to use this, the widow's cruse of oil, because Elijah said, "Go ahead and make the bread. God will keep supplying." And all the while that Elijah lived with her, the oil never ran out, and the flour never ran out. The food was a continual supply. Why? Because God was supplying his man who was facing off with Ahab and Jezebel with the food that he needed during the famine era, when people were dropping like flies because of the lack of food.

Also, when this widow's son died, Elijah raised the boy back to life, which was a miracle, again, that only God could perform. That's why the con artists who claim they have the gift of healing today always prove themselves false because they're not raising anyone from the dead – the ultimate expression of the gift of healing. But he raised this widow's son. And I want you to notice 1 Kings 17:24, where he says, "And the woman said to Elijah, 'Now by this (having raised her son back to life), I know that you are a man of God, and that in your mouth is truth.'" Why? "Because I've seen you perform this miracle." This miracle was a miracle of confirmation, and it was the miracle of giving life. This woman knew enough that, while Satan could perform miracles, as they had done in Egypt, Satan can never give life. So, miracles are for authentication.

There was, of course, the confrontation with the priests of Baal. And here again, the confrontation was a miraculous event, as you know – what took place. And it was connected with the fact that it proves that the word of Elijah was the Word of God.

There was Ahaziah, in 2 Kings 1:9-12. King Ahaziah fell through some latticework and injured himself. God said, "You're going to die." And he went to get Elijah for that kind of a terrible statement. And Elijah kept bringing fire down from heaven on the soldiers that were sent, burning them up. This was proof again that this man was God's man.

**Elisha**

Well, when Elijah left the scene, his understudy, Elisha, came on. Elisha said, "God, give me twice the power. Give me double the capacity of Elijah." And interestingly enough, in the Bible, we have twice as many miracles recorded done by Elisha than we do by Elijah. But Elisha was another miracle worker. This included the parting of the Jordan River in 2 Kings 2:14-15. And note that there were some young prophets (seminary students) who watched this. And you will notice that their reaction was, "We know now that you are indeed a man who speaks for God." By what? By the miracle. There was the purifying of the contaminated water in 2 Kings 2:19-22. There was the supply of oil to the widow in debt (2 Kings 4:1-7). There was the conception brought about for the Shunammite woman who was barren (2 Kings 4:14-17). There was the raising of the Shunammite woman's (2 Kings 4:30-36). There was the neutralizing of the poison food (2 Kings 4:40-41). There was the multiplying of the loaves of bread (2 Kings 4:42-44). There has the healing with naming the leper (2 Kings 5:14). There was the recovery of the lost axehead from the Jordan River (2 Kings 6:5-7). There was the blinding of the Syrian soldier (2 Kings 6:8-18). All of those were indicative that miracles were to confirm the period of the Word of God.

After Elisha, miracles disappeared. There was not another miracle century-after-century. In fact, the Bible tells us that even when John the Baptist came upon the scene, he was the last of the Old Testament prophets. John 10:41 said that John the Baptist performed no miracles.

In 30 A.D., Jesus came forward to take over his public ministry to fulfill the Davidic Covenant of a king over Israel's earthly kingdom. He began His ministry with the miracle at Cana of Galilee, and then throughout the ministry of Jesus, there was one miracle after another that He performed, and He always connected it to proving that His message was from God, not for fun and games. The point of the miracle was not who was benefited, but the authentication. That was the important thing. I'll give you some Scriptures. You may want to look them up on your own. We won't have time: John 2:11; John 4:47-54; John 7:31; Luke 11:20; Matthew 11:20-23; Matthew 13:54-58; Matthew 11:2-6; John 10:36-38; John 3:2; John 12:37; Acts 2:22; and, John 20:30. All of these verses indicate that Jesus performed miracle after miracle to confirm that he spoke for God.

Furthermore, this is why the disciples use the miracles. The disciples used miracles to authenticate that they spoke for God (Luke 10:8-12, Matthew 10:1, Matthew 10:5-8, and Acts 8:5-6). Those verses clearly state that the miracles were for the purpose of confirmation of the Word of God.

After the New Testament church was established, Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D. And with the dying of John the apostle in about 95 A.D., the New Testament's books had all been written, and miracles ceased. And over the centuries, there has never been another miracle performed. The period of the early church had the miracles that confirmed that God was working: the miracles of Jesus; and, the miracles of the early church. And then there was silence. Nothing miraculous happened again.

However, there is a type of miracles still coming. The next cycle, the Bible says is in the period of the Revelation. In Luke 21:11, we're told that Satan is going to make the antichrist look like God Himself because of the miracles that he will perform. And I read this to you to remind you that Satan can perform miracles. Luke 21:11: "And great earthquakes shall be in different places, and famines and pestilence and fearful sites and great signs shall there be from heaven." These miraculous events indicate that God is doing something.

Now compare that to Revelation 11:3-6, that tell about these signs and wonders that Jesus predicted in the tribulation. After three-days-and-a-half, the spirit of life from God entered into them." This is relevant to the messengers that have been killed finally by the antichrist: "They stood upon their feet; great fear fall upon them; and, they heard a great voice from heaven saying, 'Come up here,' and they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them, and the same hour there was a greater earthquake; a tenth part of the city fell; in the earthquake were slain of men 7,000; and, the remnant were terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven."

So, here miracles by God are going to be used to authenticate His message in the tribulation era. But notice what the devil is doing on the other side of the coin. He is confirming his man with miracles in Matthew 24:24.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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