

PNEUMATOLOGY (115)

4) One with this gift is very faithful in his local church life. One with this gift is truly moved by God to function as part of the whole.

Gift #6 - The gift of miracles.

The subject of miracles or the subject of the miraculous is a subject that has been and continues to be of great interest to most people. There is no question that when one reads the Bible there are various miracles that do occur on various occasions. Unfortunately, most people who have an interest in miracles do not base their perspective on an accurate understanding of the Bible. Most have a view of miracles that is mystical, not biblical.

In the Bible, miracles did not happen as random acts at any time. There were three major time frames in Scripture when miracles occurred: 1) During the days of Moses and Joshua; 2) During the days of Elijah and Elisha; and 3) During the days of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Other than these three time periods there are a view select miracles, but not many.

We would define the gift of miracles as being **a supernatural power and ability given by the Spirit of God that enabled that person, representing God, to do something that was totally beyond the realm of natural laws, thus demonstrating God's power, might and strength.**

The actual Greek word for "miracles" (dunamis) is a word that refers to power, might and strength. In fact, we get our English word dynamite from this word. When used in reference to miracles, it refers to a manifestation of God's power, God's might and God's strength (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 123).

In the gift list of I Corinthians, this gift shows up as gift number four (I Cor. 12:28). In I Corinthians 12:10, the gift is referred to as one who could "effect miracles." These words in Greek refer to one who could wrought or actuate or set in operation a manifestation of God's power, might and strength (*Ibid.*, p. 153). Hence, our definition is accurate.

The critical point to understand is the purpose of the miracles. It is right here where careful biblical analysis seems to be lost. The purpose of a miracle was never to hold a crusade so that one could draw large crowds so one could take a large offering. **The purpose of a miracle was always to authenticate God's message.** Dr. Paul Enns writes: "Miracles were given to authenticate a message, and in each of the above mentioned periods, God enabled His messengers to perform unusual miracles to substantiate the new message they were giving" (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, p. 272). We may easily illustrate this from the life of Moses (Exodus 4:1-9) or from the life of Joshua (Joshua 3:7-13). Prior to the Scriptures being written, miracles demonstrated that one was speaking truth in behalf of God.

This is precisely what the gift of miracles was during the early days of the Church Age. This particular gift was an apostolic gift that was given to authenticate an apostolic message. In other words, the gift of miracles was an apostolic sign gift that demonstrated that the message was true (II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4).

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This gift was a temporal gift which passed off the scene as the Scriptures were being completed and as the apostles had been established.

Three areas of discussion conclude the study of this particular gift. We will address them in question and answer form:

Question #1 - If the gift of miracles is no longer operative, how do we explain those who claim they have this gift and seem to be able to do the miraculous?

One very specific biblical answer to this question is Matt. 7:21-23. Jesus Christ specifically brought up this very subject. Those who do these things are not doing them by the power of God even though they are doing them in the name of Jesus. So the only explanation is they are doing the miraculous, if in fact it is miraculous, by the power of Satan.

In today's religious world, those who claim they can do the miraculous are either a religious shyster (some type of illusionist such as a David Copperfield), or someone who is religiously silly (have no idea what they are talking about) or someone who is religiously satanic (true power to do the miraculous given by the evil one). One who does the miraculous today is not of God.

Question #2 - Do we believe that God does the miraculous today?

The answer to this is an absolute yes! There is a vast difference between saying we do not believe the gift of miracles is operative today and we do not believe God's miracles are operative today. The gift of miracles was a supernatural ability given to an individual to perform a miracle. This gift has stopped. However, God still performs miracles. For example, when God's people pray and ask God for something or to do something and God answers the prayer, certainly it is miraculous. As Dr. Enns observed: "God may directly answer the prayer of a believer and perform a miracle in his life. God may heal a terminally ill person in answer to prayer, but He does not do it through the medium of another person" (pre. cit., p. 272).

Every time a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, a supernatural, miraculous conversion has occurred that is far beyond that which is natural. That person was dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from God, blinded by Satan, and God miraculously worked causing that person to be convicted and trust Christ. That is a miracle. When one comes to Christ and begins to love the truth of the Word of God and the Church of God, a miraculous transformation is occurring. This is a supernatural work of God that is truly miraculous. We do believe God does the miraculous today.

Question #3 - How do we authenticate God's message today without the gift of miracles?

We verify God's authenticate message through the written Bible. Dr. Charles Ryrie said, "The historical proof for the cessation of the gift of miracles ... is the miracle of living epistles" (p. 87).