

When and Why Miraculous Gifts Ceased and How It Matters (Ephesians 4:11)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton on January 29, 2012 at Gold Country Baptist Church

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Our text this morning is Ephesians 4:11, but I want to start in v. 7:

⁷ *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.* ⁸ *Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." ...* ¹¹ *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers ...*

Do churches today have Pastors? Teachers? Prophets? Apostles?

- Most gospel-believing Christians for 20 centuries of church history have understood that the Apostles were a temporary gift and office for the NT church along with Prophets and now that God's revelation has ceased, so has NT prophecy in the sense of new revelation
- Roman Catholic theology, however, has held to apostolic succession from Peter through their Popes the authority and infallibility and ability of NT apostles continues in the RCC Pope ex cathedra adding extrabiblical revelation and dogma
 - o Doctrine of Purgatory – 6th century, dogma in 1439
 - o Celibacy of priesthood – 11th century
 - o Indulgences – end of 12th century
 - o Added new books to Bible (Apocrypha) in 1546
 - o In 1854 Mary's Immaculate Conception (free of the stain of original sin), then just 60 years ago in 1950 they said Virgin Mary bodily ascended to heaven
- Mormonism in a different angle in the 19th century revived Apostles and Prophets as full return to all the gifts of the NT, adding their own new revelation by apostolic authority
- In the 20th century here in California, in 1900s, Pentecostals believe the gift and office of prophet/prophecy was revived (but not necessarily the gift and office of apostle)
- This became part of mainstream evangelicalism also in CA in the 1960s as the charismatic movement was born on the boulevard my wife and I used to live on in Van Nuys, CA, an alleged revival of prophecy and most other NT gifts except apostles
- In 1980s in SoCal was '3rd wave' (Vineyard/signs/wonders)
- In recent decades others have claimed to be even Apostles (full revival of all NT gifts)
- There was a lady on Christian TV (TBN's Praise the Lord) just 3 months ago, a lady who goes by Apostle Constancia
- I saw another website with blogs by Apostle Bert, Apostle Oscar, Apostle Dianne, Apostle Jacques, *Chief Apostle Eric*
- Another site has an interactive social network for Apostles 'functioning ... or emerging apostle' with email sign-up list 'moderated by apostles who have the necessary experience'

Here's from *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2008, 'Apostles Today?'

"Terry King, pastor of Bridge of Life Church in Hagerstown, Maryland, says there are men and women currently doing apostolic ministry all over the world ... William Beasley, the network leader for the Midwest region of Anglican Mission in the Americas, concurs with this assessment. ... "The East African church is ... growing spontaneously through the presence of apostles." ...

Terry King adds, "Just as every pastor needs an apostle, every apostle also needs pastors." ... "It's one of the basic assumptions of the New Testament, isn't it?" says Beasley. "We need all the gifts."

Does the NT assert or assume "we need all the gifts," including the gift of apostle and/or prophet? Let's start by noticing the context at the end of v. 7 is gifts from Christ. Apostle was not just a title or an office, it was one of His gifts: ⁸ *Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND **HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.**" ... ¹¹ And **He gave some as apostles** ...*

"He gave gifts" at end of v. 9 is same verb as v. 11: "He gave..." These aren't only offices or titles, but gifts Christ gave His church. Paul says in Gal 2 the same God who effectually "*worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles ... the grace that was given to me, they [leaders] gave the right hand of fellowship...*" (8-9 ESV). That verb in Gal 2:9 is the same as Eph 4:8 and 11, a gracious gift.

1 Cor 12:28 *And God has appointed in the church, **first apostles**, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then **gifts** of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.* ²⁹ ***All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they?** ... ³¹ But earnestly desire the greater **gifts**.* [context is gifts, apostle greatest]

If you haven't already, you're going to interact with people who believe all the gifts of the NT are in existence today. What are we to think of a supposed modern revival of apostles and/or prophets? Is it inconsistent to believe 1 or 2 of the gifts or offices in Eph 4:11 were temporary, only for the early church, but evangelists, pastors, and teachers *are for today*? Keep in mind most Charismatics agree that *apostles have not continued*, so it's not just non-Charismatics who have to wrestle with at least one of the gifts in v. 11 not being given today. But I would argue that *prophets* (in a new revelation sense) are also not being given today as they were in NT times, but Christ gives *preachers to tell forth His completed revelation/Bible*.

This is not an irrelevant or insignificant debate among scholars. Is the Scripture sufficient, or do we need a fresh "word from God"? As we read the NT Scriptures, and we see the apostles of the early church and those with them experiencing miracles, signs, wonders, healings, tongues, prophecies of the future, visions, dreams; should we who aren't living in the times of the apostles expect the same? Why or why not? What makes us think apostles ceased or *the gifts of apostles* ceased? What about those today who claim they have the miracle-working gifts as the apostles did, or they *are* apostles?

Are Christians inconsistent to say God gives pastors and teachers today at the end of v. 11 but not the apostles at the start of v. 11? And for Charismatic brethren who recognize apostles *are not given today*, is it consistent for them to argue that prophets *still are being given today*, along with miraculous gifts associated with apostles?

For us non-Charismatics, is it consistent with the unity of Eph. 4 to analyze teachings that are new to see if they're true to Scripture?

If we keep reading, the gifts God gave to the church in v. 11 are in v. 13 “*until we all attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge...*” Then in v. 14: “*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine...*” and then v. 15 says: “*but speaking the truth in love...*”

Let’s seek the truth and speak the truth in love. What’s an apostle?

APOSTOLOS=literally “sent one,” an authoritative representative and spokesman of the person or party that appointed and sent him

A. Used in a non-technical sense for those sent out *by churches* (translated “messengers/representatives *of the church*” in 2 Cor. 8:23, also same sense in Phil. 2:25, and of Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:1-3, 14:14, and others, Romans 16:7, etc.).

B. Used in a technical sense: “Apostle *of Christ*” (look at Eph 1:1) *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints...* “apostle of Christ” = *sent one of Christ*, authorized representative and spokesman of Christ who personally appointed and sent. This technical sense is only used of a select few in Acts or NT.

1. *Apostles of Christ* had a unique role in redemptive history
 - “*twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*” are on the 12 foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:14)
 - The kingdom has thrones for them over 12 tribes (Lk 22:30)

Scholars debate whether Paul was the 12th Apostle to replace the false disciple Judas of the original 12 (others say Matthias will be the 12th with his name on the New Jerusalem and that Paul was a unique Apostle alongside the 12). But regardless of whose name is written in stone or which dude is on the 12th throne, the Apostles have a very special place in God’s plan and were limited in number

2. One didn’t become an *Apostle* by his choice or church vote

Eph 1:1: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...*
Same start to first verse of 1&2 Corinthians, Colossians, 2 Tim

Gal 1:1: *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father...*

1 Tim 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God ... 2:7: ...I was appointed an apostle ...*

3. *Apostles of Christ* could write Scripture

When Paul starts out this letter to the Ephesians, he’s not writing as a mere man, he wants them to know he’s writing as an apostle, and that’s why he can write all those commands (not suggestions) in the 2nd half of the book of Ephesians, as the very *word of God*.

1 Thess. 2:13 “... which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God...” (NIV)

A key question in determining which books were part of Scripture was whether or not it was written by a recognized apostle/prophet

4. *Apostles of Christ* had the authority of Christ in His church

1 Thess 2:6 “*as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.*” What the NT Apostles command in Scripture is God’s Word. Apostle Peter commands “*remember...the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.*” (2 Peter 3:2)

5. *Apostles of Christ* had authority over all the churches

Turn back to Acts 15. Acts is short for “The Acts of the Apostles.” Paul and Barnabas had been sent out by the church of Antioch and in another church they find controversy over circumcision (15:1). ² *And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles* ⁴ *When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.* ⁵ *But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”* ⁶ *The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.* ⁷ *After there had been much debate, Peter [the Apostle] stood up... ..* ¹¹ *“But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”* ¹² *All the people kept silent, and they were listening ... [at the end of the council in v. 23] ... they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings ... [and in v. 29 they give instructions on what to avoid, v. 30, it’s read to the churches]*

Acts 16:4 *Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.*

That authority that the original apostles and leaders of the original church in Jerusalem had over all other churches, and the authority the Apostle Paul had over faraway churches was unique to them. I don’t have authority over other churches to give decrees for them to observe, and if I tried, they would say, “yeah, right, Phil *who?*” Even the most famous para-church leader or Elder board only has jurisdiction in their ministry or body, no pastor or Pope is over all. Groups that have had leaders trying to exercise Apostolic authority have tended to be *authoritarian*, arrogant, aberrant when the power is not a God-given commission but a man-imposed cultish control.

6. *Apostles* were personally chosen/commissioned by Christ

Acts 1:1 *The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.*

Was Paul personally chosen by the Lord? Yes, Acts 9:15 says so. I already read from 1 Timothy how Paul was commissioned by Jesus

7. *Apostles* must have seen the resurrected Lord Jesus

Acts 1:3 *To these [apostles in v. 2] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, **appearing to them** ...[now look down in v. 24, the Apostles]...prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, **show which one of these two You have chosen** ²⁵ **to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.**”*

And how did they know who qualifies? They say in end of v. 22: *...one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.*

Now turn to 1 Corinthians 9. Did Paul qualify as an Apostle like the 12? He persecuted the 12 long after Christ went back to heaven and before that the resurrected Christ only appeared to believers? Notice how Paul defends his apostleship in 1 Cor. 9:1 *“Am I not free? **Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?**”*

Now go to chapter 15. When did Paul see Jesus as his Lord and how did that relate to him being an apostle along with the others?

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul goes through the facts of the gospel, *“that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures [v. 3-5] ... ⁷ then He appeared to James, **then to all the apostles;** ⁸ **and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.**” ⁹ **For I am the least of the apostles ...**”*

Paul saw himself as “last of all apostles...least of the apostles.” We say “last but not least” ...Paul says “I’m the last *and least* apostle.” Paul understood in v. 8 that how Christ appeared to and appointed him was abnormal, outside the normal time, like a late birth, not in the same time the rest of the Apostles were called. Paul considered himself last of all, an apostle Jesus unusually and uniquely called.

Paul told the Corinthians to desire greater gifts (12:28, 31) but the gift of apostle apparently was no longer available to seek (14:1)? Turn to 2 Cor 12 for another way Paul and Apostles were unique.

8. The *signs of a true Apostle* included signs and wonders

2 Cor. 12:12 *The **signs of a true apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, **by signs and wonders and miracles.***

Go back to the Acts chap. 2 so you can see how Paul’s saying the same things The Twelve were doing in Acts as Apostles are the same signs the Corinthians saw Paul perform, wonders, working miracles, were part of the signs of a true apostle.

There's a specific scriptural purpose for signs, wonders, and miracles; not to impress people or make sick people well primarily, but to attest or affirm that the miracle-worker or Apostle was a true spokesman for God.

In Acts 2 the disciples are given the miraculous ability to speak in tongues or languages they had not learned (v. 4), not in gibberish no one could understand or verify, but the native tongues of all the people in Jerusalem from different nations (v. 5-11, Greek word *dialectos* is used in this chapter, the word we get "dialect" from).

In v. 14, Peter stands up with "the Eleven" (apostles) and he quotes from Joel about how when God's Spirit would be poured out, that it would be with prophecy (v. 17-18), signs, wonders (v. 19), v. 22: "*Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst ...*

Jesus was the ultimate Apostle, God's sent-one and spokesman and representative, exact representation (Heb 1:3). In Heb 3:1, Jesus is called an *Apostle* (in the highest sense and biggest capital letter **A**)

The point of Peter's sermon that day was to use the miracles, signs, and wonders that God performed through Jesus and the miracle of tongues that God was performing through His human apostles, not to focus on the great signs themselves but to focus on the great and sovereign God doing them and truth of the gospel this Jesus taught.

On Pentecost when the Spirit was poured forth in miraculous gifts, notice that Peter is pointing them to the sufficiency of Scripture in his sermon, not giving his experiences but giving an exposition or explanation of Scripture, quoting it in v.17-21, 25-28, 30-31, 34-35

What was uniquely happening in the ministry and miracles of Jesus and what was happening that day through His appointed apostles, had a special purpose in redemptive history in fulfilling Scripture from the OT and from Jesus who said "I will build My Church." The greatest miracle of the greatest Apostle Jesus, His resurrection, and ascending to heaven to give gifts (as Ephesians 4:10-11 says), His miracle and the apostle's miracles were to establish the church. Acts 2:32 "*This Jesus **God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.***"³³ "*Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **He has poured forth this which you both see and hear ...***"³⁶ "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.*"³⁷ "*Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*"³⁸ Peter said to them, "*Repent ...*

⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. [added to what? The church. That's why we also call people to repent and then be baptized before they're added to our church membership. But the key point: apostles/miracles were to establish the church, and done through the apostles and those associated with them]

⁴³ *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.* [and if we keep reading, Acts 3, Apostle Peter heals one lame from birth by a mere command "... walk!" And immediately the man's legs and ankles have strength, he stands up and starts jumping all over the place.]

Look at Acts 5:12: "***At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people ...¹⁵ to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.¹⁶ Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.***

Later in Acts, we read of apostles raising from the dead, Tabitha (by mere command, "Tabitha arise," Acts 9:41) and poor Eutychus dies falling from a 3rd story window (danger of sleeping in church in during a sermon), but the Apostle Paul raises him (Acts 20). In Acts 19:12, any piece of clothing or fabric that the Apostle touched could be used to heal the sick of all diseases and any evil spirits. If we had Apostles today, that could change the US healthcare debate.

Who in church history since the NT Apostles has performed "*the signs of a true apostle ... wonders and miracles*" like in this book? If Apostles like Acts 5:16 are still around then all people of cities all around could bring the sick and afflicted, and all would be healed. Those with the biblical gift of healing could command paralytics or paraplegics to stand and they would instantly hop up and start jumping around, or people blind from birth could be given sight.

The deaf could hear, demons were cast out, and dead were raised. Apostles could heal by their shadow and even people faraway by mere handkerchief or apron. No "healer" since NT times has been able to do what those with the true gift of healing did in NT times. God has the power to heal miraculously anytime, but no Apostle or other person has that miraculous gift of healing anytime anymore. When so-called 'faith-healers' you see on Christian TV supposedly heal after hours of repetitive music, it's not the NT gift of healing.

Miraculous Gifts – God working through human beings that He has gifted as "miracle-workers" with supernatural powers for ongoing exercise of miracles and their gift (including apostles, those with the gift of healing as well as revelatory gifts such as tongues, gift of prophecy that predicts or gives new revelation, etc)

Cessationist – Belief that miraculous *gifts* (as done by the N.T. apostles and their associates) and miracle-workers have ceased in early church history, but we don't say *God* has ceased working in His providence (constantly) or His miracles (whenever God wills).

Providence – God's ordinary continual involvement in the normal and natural affairs of life, working all things according to His will

Miracle – An extraordinary work of God that involves immediate and unmistakable intervention in the world in a way unexplainable by natural processes, causing man's wonder and giving God glory

Miracles through human agency were never normally continuously manifested across thousands or even hundreds of years of biblical history, and miracle-workers or miraculous gifts are very rare even in Bible times. Primary human miracle-workers over 4,000 years?

1. Moses and Joshua (first book of Bible, Law/Pentateuch)
2. The prophets (esp. Elijah/Elisha represent the prophets)
3. Christ and His Apostles (and those they commissioned)

How do signs/miracles relate to Apostles & Prophets in Eph 4:11? There's a connection to their writing of Scripture. Turn to Heb. 1.

Each of the those times are periods of less than 100 years and were special eras where much of God's Word was being written down. Moses and Elijah are sometimes representatives of the entire Old Testament (ex: Luke 16:31 "Moses and the Prophets" and in Luke 9, Moses and Elijah appear with Christ at the Transfiguration to 3 apostles). Christ represents God's final revelation; Moses and Elijah vanish and God says from heaven of His Son "*listen to Him*"

The book of Hebrews begins this way: *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days [NT time] has spoken to us in His Son ...*

Stephen explained in Acts 7 that just as Moses' ministry was seen to be true by his miracles, he prophesied of Jesus the final Prophet.

Hebrews 2:3 explains further: *how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴ God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*

So the purpose of the miraculous gifts was clearly to confirm and affirm the NT message and gospel with miraculous spiritual gifts.

We see the same pattern in OT times: God raises up the miracle-worker Moses at the time the first book of the OT was written. And a similar pattern when the prophets were written but then when the OT was complete, the Jews recognized for hundreds of years there were no prophets and miracle-workers ... until Jesus and the NT apostles and prophets and miracle-workers, then the NT is written.

Heb 3:1 *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;*

Hebrews goes on to show the superiority of Christ over all others, Moses, and Melchizedek, Priest/King of Salem. Christ supersedes and is superior to and sufficient for God's full and final revelation. The final book of the Bible begins: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ...*" and then the end of God's final Revelation has a sober warning not to add more prophecy to this book. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is now completed. Jesus is the final Apostle, Prophet, Priest, King. We don't need OT Priests or Kings or NT Apostles or Prophets.

We don't need new apostles and prophets or new revelation ("God told me" or "thus says the Lord" or "God spoke to me last night"). This Word of Christ is sufficient for us because Christ is sufficient. God can impress things on our heart but it must be based on and consistent with His truth revealed in His sufficient Word.

1 Corinthians 13:8 said prophecies would cease when the perfect or complete came (along with tongues and the gift of supernatural knowledge). We don't have the time to go through the arguments for how that relates to the completion of God's perfect complete revelation in Scripture, I just want to point out that Scripture itself indicates the temporary nature of prophesy, tongues, apostles, etc.

And I want to point out that prophesy and miracle-working powers *ceased when the OT was finished and wasn't being written*, and the evidence from church history is that the powers and gifts we see in the NT also ceased when the NT was finished and wasn't being written (we even see miracles diminish within the book of Acts). The miraculous gifts some have claimed 1900 years later are back, when compared carefully with the NT picture, they don't match up.

But let's go back to Ephesians, because in the very context of our passage about God giving to the church apostles and prophets, the book of Ephesians clearly connects those 2 gifts that Christ gave to the early church for a very specific purposes that settle this for me:

Eph 2:20 says the church is "... *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing ...*"²² *in whom you also are being built together ...*

God's house in the NT sense begins at foundation-level, first story of the house (end of v. 19) that v. 20 says is *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*. The upper part of the building is still being built with us, v. 22 but a foundation is only laid once for all. Apostles and prophets wrote the NT (Eph 3:4). To say prophecy is needed today in the sense of foretelling the future or telling what God said that's not in the Bible is to undermine that foundation. If by prophecy you mean *telling forth* what's in the Bible, see 4:11b.

Eph 2:20 says apostles and prophets were the *foundation* level of the church and they are joined tightly in the grammar. You cannot separate them anymore than the foundation from the cornerstone. A foundation is only laid once; you don't build a foundation on the 20th or 21st floor. If you try to rebuild one on top of a skyscraper it's a problem for you. We can't have the 1st century foundation (apostles and prophets) laid in the 21st century anymore than a 1st story floor on its roof. The building metaphor collapses if you reverse construction and try and rebuild the foundation at the top of church history by bringing back the apostles and/or prophets.

It's a serious thing to claim prophecy or to be a prophet or to add words of the Lord after the end of the book of Revelation. In Bible times, you make 1 false prophecy, you were to be stoned in OT Israel. In modern America, those who claim to be prophets but make false prophecies, instead make a lot of money on TV and on radio and in books. Today's self-professed prophets make a killing off their followers financially, but in Israel they were to be killed.

Why is this important? Do we believe God has truly given us every spiritual blessing we need in Christ (Eph. 1:3)? Do we believe God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (1 Pet 1:3)? That Scripture is sufficient? Don't add to it. How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord *is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.*

Listen, if you're going to say "thus says the Lord," or "this is what God said," the next thing you say better be quoting a Bible verse! If you base truth off feelings or impressions, or some "burning in your bosom" ... Mormons came up with that and the idea of new revelation and prophets, before 20th century Christian groups did.

Don't trust *your subjective impressions of what you feel God told you*, trust in the solid *objective revelation of what God has told us in His Word*, rightly interpreted in context and applied in our lives!

Does God convict us, lead us, prompt us? Yes, but it's different to say God *leads* than to say God *speaks outside of His Word*. God's Spirit applies truths we know/read in His Word that is sufficient, not new truths God forgot to reveal for the rest of us in Scripture! There is nothing more *fresh* or up-to-date than this written Word. Apostles and prophets of NT received direct revelation from God and wrote down all we needed to know—how firm a foundation!

By the way, there is another miracle taking place in Acts 2:37 greater than tongues. It's the Spirit of God working in the heart of a spiritually dead sinner so that he is awakened to his sin and need for a Savior and made alive to Christ. His heart is pierced by Scripture and convicted by the Spirit and will be changed and replaced by regenerating grace (that's what God is doing behind the scenes). On the human side, we then cry "what must I do...?" The biblical answer: "repent."

Does God do miracles today? Absolutely! That doesn't mean we should expect Him to raise people from physical death before our eyes like Jesus and the Apostles and OT prophets did in their time, although He can and will again (book of Revelation, all in the end). But v. 37 is the miracle a lot of people miss and is the miracle all the other miracles pointed to: *spiritual resurrection by the power of the gospel* is what the miracle of Christ's physical resurrection in v. 32 is parallel to. And the power of His is the same in all of ours, and we can see that miracle.

In Ephesians 1:19 Paul prays that our eyes would be opened so that we would know "*his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms ...*" (NIV, below NASB):

2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ...⁴ But God ...⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places ...*

Paul wants the Ephesian church to know (and God wants all of us to know) that God has not stopped doing miracles. Every believer in this room is only a believer because of a miracle by the mighty resurrecting power that raised Christ from a state of deadness, that same miracle-working power gave life to us when spiritually dead

Once we are made alive (Eph 2:5) we can receive the gift of faith, but v. 8-9 say even *that is not off/from us but is the gift of God*. So many Christians do not have their eyes open to what an amazing and astonishing miracle it is that they who were utterly lost have been found, the formerly spiritually blind have been made to see, the spiritually disabled and unable can walk, the dead made alive!

The great gift the Apostle Peter wanted to point his listeners to at Pentecost in Acts 2 was not the gift of supernatural languages, or other signs and wonders, it's the gift of salvation in end of v. 38. That same forgiveness in v. 38 is offered to you if you will repent. If your heart is convicted over your sin, turn from it, trust Christ, and v. 39 says this promise (Spirit/forgiveness) is for all God calls.