

## God's Gracious Gifts to the Body Romans 12:6-8

Romans 12:3–8 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. <sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

### Introduction:

Today we come to a section in the Book of Romans that is no doubt going to open a can of

worms. And once it is opened, I seriously doubt I will be able to get all the worms back into the can. There are cessationists worms and non-cessationist worms. There are experiential worms and more logical worms. There are some worms that will deny the supernatural can occur today altogether and there are some worms that will try to fly because they believe God can miraculously give them wings.

Now all of us understand that there are extremes on everything, and when it comes to spiritual gifts, there is an ever increasing amount of extremes that end up in the utterly bazaar. If you have ever watched Justin Peters youtube channel regarding some the crazy things some of the Charismatics will do and claim you will understand.

Just, look for “Why are charismatics so Weird” and you fill get your fill of the bazaar.

But then there are the extremes that would say that nothing supernatural can occur. That God has restricted himself to this box and he cannot and will not come out of it.

Some are willing to write off every claim of the miraculous regardless of historical attestation to it by Godly men.

There are men like Paul Washer, Jonathan Edwards, George Winfield, Charles Spurgeon, John Piper, and John MacArthur that have given testimony to supernatural event occurring in an around their ministries that cannot be explained other than supernatural and miraculous.

In my last trip to the Shepherds Conference we met a pastor who pastors a church in Washington state, who was raised in Egypt. His mom and dad where missionaries to that region in the Middle East for a number of decades. He told me that being a missionary to the Islamic peoples is very hard and is life threatening. And sometimes it is very hard to have a conversation regarding the exclusive claims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He confirmed a few things that I was pleased to hear, one being that the underground church in Iran is the fastest growing church in the world and that most of people of Iran do not support the extremes of their leadership. But then he confirmed something I had only heard and read on a couple of occasions, that at least 50% of the people being converted by the Gospel to Christianity are coming via dreams and visions.

He told us that there was a woman that came to his mother while they lived in Egypt and told her that a man had appeared in a dream telling her to come

to his mother and listen to what she had to say about Jesus Christ. So his mother told there the gospel and she was saved.

He said some claim it is a man, some claim it is Jesus, while other do not know who it is. But the consistent thing is that the man who who shows up in the dream never tells them the gospel and never tells them who Jesus really is, but rather, tells them to go to a certain person or place, and that there is a person there who will tell you who Jesus is.

He said that there is an underground church in Gaza that recently grew by over 200 overnight, because many of the Islamic men had a dream, where a man appeared telling them to go to this church and to listen to what they say about Jesus, and they were converted.

Now, if true, this is an amazing thing. A truly miraculous thing.

Now you can believe that this is true or you can believe that it is false. But we have to do something with it. People who do not have a history in evangelical thought much less Reformed theology or cessationism are being told in dreams to go to someone who will tell them the gospel so they can be saved.

Plus an honest look at church history does not necessarily produce a perfect picture of cessation. It seems that at times God has visited his people with supernatural events or giftedness that hard to fit neatly in our Theological Box of cessationism.

Some have stated that these things and events are just extraordinary occurrences in Providence. And even some who are clearly of the cessationism side would not want to put God in a Box and say that He could never do anything miraculous or supernatural.

Godly leaders and preachers that we look up to have testified to instances of God supernaturally giving information that Only God would know.

Like for instance, one that we call trust is Charles Spurgeon, The Prince of Preachers that everyone likes to quote. The one who who would fight to the literal death for the clarity of the Bible on the Doctrines of Grace, so much so that he would say that Calvinism is the essence of the Gospel.

He said,

I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a

nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the Gospel and nothing else..

There is no one more reformed in their Soteriology than Charles Spurgeon and yet he had things happen that are clearly miraculous

Spurgeon was, in all likelihood, a cessationist, the reactions have been interesting! Let me explain.

Spurgeon tells of one particular incident that occurred in the middle of his sermon.

“While preaching in the hall, on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said, ‘There is a man sitting there, who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays, it was open last Sabbath morning, he took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!’ A city missionary, when going his rounds, met with this man, and seeing that he was reading one of my sermons, he asked the question, ‘Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?’ ‘Yes,’ replied the man, ‘I have every reason to know him, I have been to hear him; and, under his preaching, by God’s grace I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Shall I tell you how it happened? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place; Mr. Spurgeon looked at me as if he knew me, and in his sermon he

pointed to me, and told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I kept my shop open on Sundays; and I did, sir. I should not have minded that; but he also said that I took ninepence the Sunday before, and that there was fourpence profit out of it. I did take ninepence that day, and fourpence was just the profit; but how he should know that, I could not tell. Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him, so I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him, lest he should tell the people more about me; but afterwards I went, and the Lord met with me, and saved my soul” (Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon* [London: Curts & Jennings, 1899], 2:226-27). <https://www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/when-a-cessationist-prophesies--or--what-are-we-to-make-of-charles-spurgeon>

Spurgeon then adds this comment:

“I could tell **as many as a dozen similar cases** [emphasis mine] in which I pointed at somebody in the hall without having the slightest knowledge of the person, or any idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit to say it; and so striking has been my description, that the persons have gone away, and said to their friends, ‘Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; beyond a doubt, he must have been sent of God

to my soul, or else he could not have described me so exactly.’ And not only so, but I have known many instances in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge their neighbours with their elbow, because they had got a smart hit, and they have been heard to say, when they were going out, ‘The preacher told us just what we said to one another when we went in at the door’” (ibid., 227). <https://www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/when-a-cessationist-prophesies--or--what-are-we-to-make-of-charles-spurgeon>

On another occasion, Spurgeon broke off his sermon and pointed at a young man, declaring: “Young man, those gloves you are wearing have not been paid for: you have stolen them from your employer.” After the service an obviously pale and agitated young man approached Spurgeon and begged to speak with him privately. He placed a pair of gloves on the table and said, “It’s the first time I have robbed my master, and I will never do it again. You won’t expose me, sir, will you? It would kill my mother if she heard that I had become a thief” (Charles H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography: The Full Harvest, 1860-1892* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973], 2:60).

Finally, in an article he wrote for *Sword and Trowel* in October 1865, Spurgeon declares: “Our personal pathway has been so frequently directed contrary to our own design and beyond our own conception by singularly powerful impulses, and

irresistibly suggestive providences, that it were wanton wickedness for us to deride the doctrine that God occasionally grants to his servants a special and perceptible manifestation of his will for their guidance, over and above the strengthening energies of the Holy Spirit, and the sacred teaching of the inspired Word. We are not likely to adopt the peculiarities of the Quakers, but in this respect we are heartily agreed with them.

There are many others that in the the Reformed tradition that were sympathetic to and had personal experience with these (impressions) as Charles Spurgeon called them.

Like John Calvin

Samual Rutherford  
 Scottish Reformers,  
 John Knox  
 George Wishart, 1513-1546

Others that support this view of the Reformed Tradition would be Martyn Lloyd Jones, John Piper, Sam Storms and Wayne Grudem

....from appendix 7 of Wayne Grudem's *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Revised Edition) where Grudem survey's the historical evidence for the apparent operation of some

Reformed or Reformational ministers in the gift of the Spirit.

At one point Grudem writes:

...I may add a personal note at this point: When I first found this material in Baxter, I photocopied these two pages and sent them to J. I. Packer, whose doctoral dissertation at Oxford was on Baxter's work. Packer sent back the following note:

By the way, some weeks ago you faxed me an extract from Baxter about God making personal informative revelations. This was the standard Puritan view, as I have observed it—they weren't cessationists in the Richard Gaffin sense

But at this point, I think it is important to remind ourselves of the other words of Charles Spurgeon,

Spurgeon however often warned.... if opposed to Scripture and common sense, we must neither believe in them nor obey them. The precious gift of reason is not to be ignored; we are not to be drifted hither and thither by every wayward impulse of a

fickle mind, nor are we to be led into evil by suppositious impressions; these are misuses of a great truth, a murderous use of most useful edged tools. But notwithstanding all the folly of hair-brained rant, we believe that the unseen hand may be at times assuredly felt by gracious souls, and the mysterious power which guided the minds of the seers of old may, even to this day, sensibly overshadow reverent spirits. We would speak discreetly, but we dare say no less.”

<https://www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/when-a-cessationist-prophesies--or--what-are-we-to-make-of-charles-spurgeon>

I have been the subject of such impressions, myself, and have seen very singular results. But to *live* by impressions is oftentimes to live the life of a fool and even to fall into downright rebellion against the revealed Word of God. Not your impressions, but that which is in this Bible must always guide you. "To the Law and to the Testimony." If it is not according to this Word, the impression comes not from God—it may proceed from Satan, or from your own distempered brain! Our prayer must be, "Order my steps in Your Word.

Sometime, too, but rarely, *God guides us by very vivid impressions*. I have seen so much of people

who have been impressed this way, and that way, and the other way, that I do not believe in impressions except in certain cases. I was once in conversation with two friends, one of whom was guided by his judgment, while the other was swayed by impressions, and I could not help noting that the man who was guided by impressions was, as such people always will be, "unstable as water." If I am impressed in one way one day, I may be impressed in another way the next day, so impressions are unreliable guides. There was a young man, who was impressed with the idea that he ought to preach for me one Lord's day; but as I was not impressed to let him do so, it stood over, and probably will continue to stand over for some little time. He had no gifts of speech, but he thought his impression was quite sufficient. When I receive a similar impression, the revelation will be a proper one, and you will have the pleasure of listening to his voice, but certainly not before that.

<http://phillipjohnson.blogspot.com/2005/11/spurgeon-on-private-prophecies-and-new.html>

It is a dangerous thing for us to make the whims of our brain instead of the clear precepts of God, the guide of our moral actions. "To the law and to the testimony,"—this is the lamp that shows the

Christian true light; be this your chart, be this your compass; but as to impressions, and whims, and fancies, and I know not what beside which some have taken,—these are more wreckers lights that will entice you on the rocks. Hold fast to the Word of God, and nothing else; whoever he shall be that shall guide you otherwise, close your ears to him. If at any time, through infirmity or weakness, I should teach you anything which is contrary to this Book, cast it from you, hurl it away as chaff is driven from the wheat; if it be mine and not my Master's, cast it away. Though you love me, though I may have been the means of your conversion to God, think no more of what I say than of the very strangers in the street, if it be not consistent with the teachings of the Most High. Our guide is his written Word, let us keep to this.

<http://phillipjohnson.blogspot.com/2005/11/spurgeon-on-private-prophecies-and-new.html>

These testimonies and experiences are a challenge for us who are strict cessationist, like myself. I am not drawn to this and have no desire to pray for it or seek it. However I find them fascinating to read and encouraging to hear. But frankly, if someone came to me and told me that God told me that You should do this or that, or this will happen to you. Or if someone

used different words, like, I have a sense that God is going to do this or that.

My antennas would immediately go up and my radar would start operations and my discernment level would peak out. I would immediately be suspicious. I am not built that way to gravitate in that direction. I seem to be more objective than subjective. An my history of study and ministry has proven to me over and over, the sufficiency of the Scripture and the leading of the Spirit through the Word or principles derived from the Word, so that I am not inclined in the direction of impressions or senses or Word's from God.

However, with that said, I have experienced times when I was preaching and I would go off script and say something or have a verse come to mind that I would comment on and would find out later that God had ministered directly to a person in the Congregation that morning about a specific need.

I will admit, there is a unique sense of God's presence in the preaching and teaching of the Word. I can't explain it but it does happen. I don't feel anything different when a thought outside of my prepared sermon comes to mind. No goosebumps, not strange lights, no being overcome by emotion. Nothing other than the thought

appears and I see it as relevant or sometime not relevant but sense the need to add it in the the sermon.

I would never claim to have the gift of prophecy in the same sense as the N.T. use but I believe I have the gift of teaching.

Paul begins this topic of Spiritual Gifts by discussion the diversity and unity of the Body of Christ, with an emphasis on the interdependence of each member on one another. His goal is to help the believers at Rome understand that one person is not more valuable than the other. But each person, each member of the Body of Christ has been sovereignly placed there by God and uniquely gifted to serve the body in a way that no there part of the body can function. The foot cant do what the tongue does and the the hand cannot do what the eye does and to be missing the function of one member of the body is to be crippled.

And as the problem was in the Corinthian assembly, they were over emphasizing the public speaking gifts and the miraculous over the less spectacular serving gifts. Pride and arrogance had found its way in and was destroying the

effectiveness of the Body for edification and evangelism.

Paul now introduces a short and incomplete list of the gifts.

The gifts are mentioned here in this passage and also in I Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12:4–11 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: <sup>8</sup> for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

There seems to be an emphasis on the gifts that uniquely occupied each individual church. Rome may not have had the same giftedness as the Corinthian church. Paul does not mention, tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, miracles, knowledge, wisdom, discerning of spirits..... in fact, it seems to be a wholly different list other than prophecy.

The difference ultimately falls at the feet of the sovereignty of God and how He gifted each church but there may be for or understanding some practical reasons.

1. Corinth was a particularly evil and morally corrupt society, full of sexual perversion and idolatry. They would have had at the same time the influence of secular godless philosophy being pumped from Athen Greece.

2. There location in the Mediterranean which was on the major Trade routes which would have brought all kinds of cultures and languages to that region of the world.

Corinth's strategic location and its role as a hub of trade and commerce contributed to the spread of

Christianity. This facilitated the movement of people and ideas, including the spread of Christianity. The establishment of a thriving Christian community in Corinth served as a catalyst for the spread of the faith to other parts of Greece and beyond. The Corinthians' contributions to the New Testament and the development of early Christianity have lasting significance.

<https://www.athenstourgreece.com/the-importance-of-corinth-in-the-bible/#:~:text=As a result, Corinth earned,for the spread of Christianity.>

This would explain the need for the gift of languages and interpretation. The miracles and healing could have been for the simple proof of the God being the one true God in the midst of the a polytheism that was rampant.

1 Corinthians 8:5–6 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), <sup>6</sup> yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.

The spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament, primarily in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12, fall into

three categories: **sign, speaking, and serving**. Before the New Testament was written, men had no standard for judging the truthfulness of someone who preached, taught, or witnessed in the name of Christ. The sign gifts authenticated the teaching of the apostles—which was the measure of all other teaching

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [Romans](#) (Vol. 2, p. 168). Moody Press.

## Sign Gifts

2 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

**First we need to identify who Paul is talking about when he uses the term Apostle..**

The apostles had a one-of-a-kind, non-repeatable, and nontransferable role in the history of the church. To fail to understand that role is to have an incomplete understanding of the history of redemption

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2003). [2 Corinthians](#) (p. 409). Moody Publishers.

In addition to the Twelve and Paul, the New Testament names several other individuals as

“messengers [apostles] of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23). In that passage, the phrase refers to the two unnamed brothers who assisted Titus with the collection at Corinth. Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), Andronicus, Junius, and others (Rom. 16:7), James, the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19), and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) were also apostles of the churches. Unlike the Twelve and Paul, they were not personally commissioned by Jesus Christ. Instead, they were chosen by the churches to serve as their officially authorized representatives.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2003). [2 Corinthians](#) (pp. 409–410). Moody Publishers.

## To be an Apostle like the 12 plus Paul

**First**, the apostles were sovereignly chosen by God for their ministry. The Lord told Ananias, “[Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Paul reflected on God’s choice of him both to salvation and to apostolic service in Galatians 1:15: “God ... set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace.” In his first inspired letter to the Corinthians, Paul affirmed that he was “called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (1 Cor. 1:1; cf. Rom. 1:1; 2

Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1). He reminded Timothy, “For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim. 2:7; cf. 2 Tim. 1:11). God also chose the other apostles (Acts 10:41; 1 Cor. 12:28).

**Second**, the apostles were personally appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 6:13 records that “He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.” In John 15:16 He told the apostles, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.”

Jesus even sovereignly chose Judas, who betrayed Him: “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him” (John 6:70–71). Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders of “the ministry which [he] received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). At his conversion on the Damascus Road Jesus said to Paul, “For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you” (Acts 26:16). To the Romans he wrote, “Through [Jesus Christ] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake” (Rom. 1:5). As “an apostle [Paul was] not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:1). To Timothy he added, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service” (1 Tim. 1:12). Christ’s call of the apostles was the outworking of God’s eternal choice.

**Third**, the apostles had to have been **eyewitnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection**. After Judas's defection and suicide, Judas's replacement had to meet very specific requirements:

“Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (vv. 21–26)

Peter told those gathered at the house of Cornelius that the apostles were “witnesses of all the things [Jesus] did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem” (Acts 10:39). Specifically, the apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection: “God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God,

that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead” (vv. 40–41).

Paul had not been one of Jesus’ followers during His earthly ministry, yet he was no less an apostle. “Am I not an apostle?” he challenged the Corinthians; “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1). Recounting the postresurrection appearances of Christ, Paul concluded, “Last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also” (1 Cor. 15:8). In addition to his initial vision on the Damascus Road, Acts records that Paul saw the resurrected Christ three other times (18:9–10; 22:17–21; 23:11).

**Fourth,** the apostles **received the gospel by direct revelation from Jesus Christ, not from other men.** The Lord taught the Twelve during His time on earth (e.g., Matt. 20:17–19; John 13–17), including the forty days between His resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:1–3). Paul, though he did not sit under Christ’s teaching during the Lord’s earthly ministry, nevertheless received the gospel directly from Him. In Galatians 1:11–12 he wrote, “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Writing to the Corinthians about the Lord’s Supper Paul said,

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (1 Cor. 11:23–25)

He prefaced his synopsis of the gospel he had preached to the Corinthians by reminding them, “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received” (1 Cor. 15:3). To the Ephesians Paul wrote, “By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:3–4). He also affirmed that the gospel, “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men ... has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (v. 5).

**Fifth**, the apostles were the foundation of the church. In Ephesians 2:20 Paul wrote that the church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (cf. Matt. 16:18). God gave apostles to the church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). From the earliest days of the church the believers “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). The apostles laid the doctrinal foundation of the church, which is codified in the New Testament. Those who followed them built on that foundation.

Having been laid once and for all (Jude 3), the foundation does not need to be continuously laid today by self-proclaimed apostles. After giving the church the Word of God in the New Testament (2 Peter 1:19), the apostles passed from the scene, never to be replaced.

**Sixth, the apostles were given unique ministry duties.** Their first responsibility was to be discipled by the Lord. Mark 3:14 says that Jesus “appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him.” They then were to be models of godliness for other believers to follow. Therefore Paul exhorted the Corinthians, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:6).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2003). [2 Corinthians](#) (pp. 410–413). Moody Publishers.

[Second we need to understand what the signs of an apostle were.](#)

2 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

These signs had to be unique enough that they would have stood out among the miraculous events and gifts of the Roman or Corinthian Assembly

It is clear from this text, that there were unique, supernatural, miraculous gifts associated with the apostles that don't appear in the context of the local churches conducted by the gifted congregation.

For instance.

### **1. Peter's shadow.**

Acts 5:12–16 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. <sup>13</sup> Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. <sup>14</sup> And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, <sup>15</sup> so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. <sup>16</sup> Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

### **2. Pauls handkerchiefs**

Acts 19:11–12 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Now God worked **unusual miracles** by the hands of Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

tn BDAG 1019 s.v. τυγχάνω 2.d states, “δυνάμεις οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας **extraordinary miracles** Ac 19:11.”

Biblical Studies Press. (2005). [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#). Biblical Studies Press.

### 3. Paul raises the dead.

Acts 20:7–12 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. <sup>8</sup> There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. <sup>9</sup> And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. <sup>10</sup> But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.” <sup>11</sup> Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. <sup>12</sup> And

they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

## 2 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

**by signs and wonders and miracles.** (12:12c)

These words “do not describe three types of miracles but miracles in general considered from three aspects—their ability to authenticate the message (“signs”), evoke awe (“wonders”), and display divine power (“mighty deeds”)” (Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 10:398). The supernatural **miracles** done by the apostles were **signs** pointing to them as genuine messengers of God. They were **wonders** that created amazement and astonishment, drawing the onlookers’ attention to the message the apostles proclaimed.

That miracles are not normative for all periods of church history should be obvious from Paul’s designation of them as the signs of an apostle. If

they were commonplace, they could hardly have distinguished the apostles from ordinary believers. It was their rarity, as well as their unusual extent, that made them definitive signs of the apostles. Nor were miracles scattered haphazardly throughout redemptive history. Scripture reveals a threefold purpose for signs, wonders, and miracles that confines them to specific periods.

First, miracles introduced successive eras of divine revelation. The miracles recorded in Scripture took place during three time periods: the time of Moses and Joshua, the time of Elijah and Elisha, and the ministry of Christ and the apostles. God attested the giving of the Law with some miracles at the time of Moses and Joshua. The miracles done by Elijah and Elisha symbolized the second great era of Old Testament revelation, the prophets (cf. Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40). The miracles God performed through them authenticated them as prophets who spoke for Him (see the discussion below). Still, these periods had few miracles.

By far the greatest number of miracles in redemptive history occurred during the time of Christ and the apostles. The Incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity and the dawn of the day of redemption, as well as the revelation of the New

Testament and of the church sparked an outpouring of miracles unequalled either before or since.

While all miracles are supernatural acts of God, not all supernatural acts of God are miracles. These signs, wonders, and miracles were supernatural acts done by God *through a human agent*. The reason for that lies in the second purpose of miracles: to authenticate the messengers of God. Miracles were designed to act as signs creating wonder that drew people to conclude that the message from those who performed them came from God. Thus, such expressions of God's power as creation, the Flood, and other acts of divine judgment are supernatural acts of God, but not signs and wonders. Signs and wonders are thus a subcategory of God's supernatural acts.

God granted Moses miraculous powers to prove to the Israelites that he was God's messenger (Ex. 4:1–9; cf. Acts 7:36). Elijah's ability to call down fire from heaven demonstrated that he was a man of God (2 Kings 1:10, 12; cf. 1 Kings 18:36–38), as did his restoration of the widow's dead son to life (1 Kings 17:17–24). In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost Peter declared, "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, just

as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22; cf. Mark 6:2; Luke 19:37; John 3:2; 5:36; 7:31; 10:25, 38; 11:47; 12:37; 14:11; Acts 10:38). The apostles were authenticated in the same way as God’s earlier spokesmen. Hebrews 2:3–4 warns,

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, 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.

Acts 2:43 records that “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles” (cf. Acts 4:30; 5:12). Describing the ministry of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, Luke noted that “the Lord ... was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3; cf. 15:12; 19:11). Paul reminded the Romans,

Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of

the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Rom. 15:17–19)

To the Thessalonians he wrote, “Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). Though Acts does not record any of the miracles Paul performed at Corinth, it is clear that he did. Otherwise, his claim, **The signs of a true apostle were performed among you ... by signs and wonders and miracles**, would have made no sense.

Finally, God used miracles to reveal truth about Himself to those who observed them. God commanded Moses, “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments’ ” (Ex. 6:6–7). In Exodus 34:10

God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working

of the Lord, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.”

Nehemiah 9:10 says, “Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his servants and all the people of his land; for You knew that they acted arrogantly toward them, and made a name for Yourself as it is this day.” Psalm 135:9 reveals that God “sent signs and wonders into [the] midst [of] Egypt, upon Pharaoh and all his servants.” Jeremiah wrote, “[God] set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and even to this day both in Israel and among mankind; and [He] ... made a name for [Himself], as at this day” (Jer. 32:20).

The apostles held a unique, nontransferable, and highly privileged place in the history of the church. The apostolate was never intended to be a perpetual institution; in fact, there are clear indications in the New Testament the apostolic era was already drawing to a close. According to Acts 5:16, all the sick who came to the apostles were healed. However, by the end of Paul’s life the situation had dramatically changed. His beloved son in the faith Timothy faced a recurring illness. But instead of healing him, Paul counseled him to treat the illness by drinking wine (1 Tim. 5:23). Nor was Paul able to

heal another of his close companions, Trophimus, whom he had to leave sick at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).

The early days of the Jerusalem church were punctuated by signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 5:12). Yet Acts records no miracles in that city after Stephen's martyrdom (cf. Acts 6:8). Some might argue that the apostles left the city, and thus were not present to perform miracles. Yet they remained in Jerusalem after the outbreak of the persecution associated with the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The supernatural invincibility afforded the apostles during the early years (cf. Acts 12:6–11) was also gradually withdrawn, and nearly all of the apostles were martyred. Finally, the writer of Hebrews spoke both of the apostles ("those who heard" the Lord) and of the signs and wonders they performed in the past tense (Heb. 2:3–4). Both the time of the apostles and the miracles associated with them were passing away.

Their qualifications and foundational role in God's plan for the church made the apostles unique. Having laid the solid doctrinal foundation for the church, they passed from the scene, never to be replaced. Apostles, signs, wonders, and miracles are not normative for the church today. What is normative is the Bible, which is complete (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18), stands forever (Isa. 40:8; Matt. 5:17–18;

24:35), and is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2003). [2 Corinthians](#) (pp. 414–417). Moody Publishers.

John Calvin

But one of the most remarkable circumstances of a supernatural kind, recorded in the life of this Reformer [i.e. John Calvin], is the manner in which he was miraculously made acquainted, at Geneva, with a battle that was being fought near Paris. That is, he was miraculously made acquainted with it at the time of its occurrence, and many days before the arrival of the intelligence.

"One thing must not be omitted, that on the nineteenth of December" (1562), "Calvin lying in bed sick of the gout, it being the Sabbath-day, and the north wind having blown two days strongly, he said to many who were present, 'Truly I know not what is the matter, but I thought this night I heard warlike drums beating very loud, and I could not persuade myself but it was so. Let us therefore go to prayers, for surely some great business is in hand.' And this day there was a great battle fought between the Guisians and the Protestants not far from Paris, news whereof came to Geneva within a few days after." Scottish Reformers

There are some Scottish Reformers who also attest to the supernatural

George Wishart, 1513-1546

Wishart was born in Scotland and died as a martyr, being 33 years old. He was a teacher of New Testament Greek at Montrose. He was exceptional in his eloquence and manner of communication.

Being the time of the reformation, he adopted the Reformed view of Scripture, denied the errors of the Catholic Church and was then charged with heresy. He married the daughter of John Knox.

The Catholic church was dominant in Scotland and his preaching against the papacy and the catholic doctrinal errors, aroused in the papists such a fury that he was threatened with death.

The plague being now considerably abated, he determined to pay a visit to the town of Montrose. . he received a letter directed to him from his intimate friend the laird of Kinnear, acquainting him that he had taken a sudden sickness, and requested him to come to him with all diligence. Upon this he immediately set out on his journey, attended by some honest friends in Montrose, who, out of affection, would accompany him part of the way. **They had not traveled above a quarter of a mile, when all of a sudden he stopped, saying to the company, "I am forbidden by God to go this journey.** Will some of you be pleased to ride to yonder place (point with his finger to a little hill), and see what you find, for I apprehend there is a plot against my life; " whereupon he returned to the town, and they, who went forward to the place, found about sixty horsemen ready to intercept him. By this the whole plot came to light; they found that the letter had been forged; and upon their telling Mr. Wishart what they had seen, he replied, "I know that I shall end my life by the hands of that wicked man (meaning the Cardinal), but it will not be after this manner." (The Scots Worthies," by John Howie, of Lochgoin. Edingburgh and London: