

724 Does Anyone Have Miraculous Gifts Today?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

If you watch much religious television, you'll probably see a preacher claim that he can miraculously heal someone just by calling the name of Jesus and touching them. Perhaps you've wondered if they can really do that. Well, stay with us and we'll explore that question in an important Bible study. Today we're asking the question, "Does anyone have miraculous gifts today?" There can be no doubt that Jesus and the apostles had the miraculous ability to make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the sick to be healed. Jesus could walk on water, multiply the loaves and fishes, still the storms, and raise the dead. To hear some preachers today, they claim to be able to duplicate some of these miraculous signs. Now, we don't doubt at all Jesus and the apostles could do these things, but we want to explore whether people actually have those miraculous gifts today. Do people today have the ability to perform miracles like they did in the Bible?

When people claim to speak from God and claim to work healing miracles, Christians should test those claims. John said in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." Jesus commended the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:2 for their faithfulness; Jesus told them He knew "how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false." There are religious leaders today who make claims of power but cannot bear the test. They cite passages as Mark 16:17-18, "And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." They think that there are no differences between the first century and the present.

The Lord gave man power to work miraculous gifts in order to confirm the preaching of the gospel by the apostles and prophets (Mark 16:20). These miraculous signs were proof or guarantees that they were speaking God's Word with God's blessing. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, "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." The confirmation here is like that of a governmental seal upon a legal document; once the confirmation has been made, further proof is never needed. Now since the preaching of the gospel "was confirmed" in the first century, it no longer needs confirming by miracles again and again. Jesus promised that all truth would be revealed to the apostles in John 16:12-13. He said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." This revelation is complete and once for all; God is no longer inspiring men to reveal new truth. If this is the case, no miraculous signs are needed today.

Paul clearly states the miraculous gifts will cease in 1 Corinthians 13. Paul declares that love is more important than any miraculous gift (13:1-3), Then he describes love (13:4-7). In the final section of the chapter (13:8-13), he shows that love is greater because it will outlast the spiritual gifts. Paul said, "Prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and (miraculous) knowledge will be done away." This caused Paul to say that "we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (13:9-10). These miraculous gifts were to cease when "that which is perfect is come."

What is "that which is perfect"? Since "perfect" means complete," it stands in contrast with that which is in part." The "part" is miraculous knowledge and prophecy, which revealed the Word of God orally. It is most natural, then, to realize that the complete or "perfect" is the full revelation given to man in the written record of the New Testament. This complete revelation of God's will, "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), came into general possession about the end of the first century. When the complete came, the partial was done away. Since the New Testament records the complete will of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3), there is no longer a need for miraculous gifts in the twentieth century to give us any more revelation.

The best reason for denying miraculous gifts today comes from experience with those who claim these gifts. Just as there was a difference between Simon the sorcerer and Philip in Acts 8, so there is today a difference between so-called faith healers and the miracles Jesus and His apostles performed. If real miracles through spiritual gifts are occurring today, they should be easy to verify. They should be like the miracles you read about in the New Testament. But we must question them today. We intend to test the spirits. People who think they are healed often find that they are not. One woman told me several years ago that a faith healer miraculously healed her ear. And in her deception she said further, "But I went to the hospital and had the surgery anyway just to make sure." It never occurred to her that the faith healer had failed to heal her. A brief comparison between the New Testament gift of healing and that practiced today by Charismatics is quite revealing.

First, Jesus healed everyone who came to him without fail.

Matthew 4:23-424 says, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them." The apostles were also successful. In Acts 5:14-16, the Bible says, "Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured."

Second, Jesus healed everyone completely; no one came back in a few days still suffering.

Crippled persons who had lost arms and legs and eyes were made whole, so that the crowd could see immediate physical changes. Matthew 15:29-31 says, "After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel." Maimed persons are crippled with arms or legs missing. To make the maimed whole means that he gave them new arms and legs, new hands and feet. The lame were also physically changed. We have seen lame people whose legs were shriveled or whose foot seemed out of place. Jesus healed people in a way that no one could deny it. Who is putting on arms and legs today? No one!

In Acts 3:1-2, the man Peter and John healed was lame from birth. People had to carry him in and lay him at the gate. When the apostles healed him, everyone could see the difference. Acts 3:7-10 says, "And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he

stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” It’s no wonder the people in the Sanhedrin said in Acts 4:16, “For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable sign has been done through them; we cannot deny it.” Who is restoring withered limbs today? No one!

Are modern faith healers raising the dead to life? Have they ever stopped at the scene of a fatal car accident and restored shattered bodies to life, as Paul did with Eutychus? Eutychus had fallen out of a window and died (Acts 20:9-12). He probably had a cracked skull, broken bones and serious internal injuries, yet he was completely healed in an instant! Have they ever walked up to a coffin at a funeral and simply spoken the dead back to life? It is interesting that those claiming the gift of healing today do not spend much time in funeral homes, with funeral processions, or in cemeteries. Jesus stopped a funeral procession and gave the widow of Nain her son back. While there are stories on Christian television shows of those who supposedly died and then came back to life, these stories don’t speak of a resurrection at a funeral home or four days later at the grave. No, they usually speak of a person in a hospital who is revived by doctors after a few minutes. If Charismatic healers could raise the dead, like Christ and the apostles, then they could prove it by doing it in front of a large group of witnesses.

If miraculous healings were still occurring, anyone could take a camcorder to the healing crusade and film the miracle for all to see. We could see the maimed whole or the lame restored. We could see the physical body change immediately. But why is this not happening? Because the supposed healings taking place today always deal with what you cannot see. The supposed healing today deals with back pain, hemorrhoids, leg lengthening (not by several inches but half an inch), or headaches. Christ restored a man’s hand that was lifeless and withered; the “hand was restored as whole as the other” right in front of Christ’s enemies (Lk. 6:10). Jesus restored Malchus’ ear that had been cut off, right in front of His enemies (Lk. 22:51-52). Are modern faith healers restoring amputated limbs? Of course not! Can you go to a healing crusade and observe a withered hand restored? No. If anyone were healing crippled legs, withered hands, cut-off ears, blind eyes, deaf ears, palsy, or hemorrhages like Christ and the apostles, they would be on the nightly news. Sadly, the only time faith healers make the news is because of fraud or evil deeds.

Third, the enemies of Jesus admitted that he could work miracles, but today faith healers are regarded as frauds—and rightly so. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some people ran into Jerusalem to tell the chief priests. John 11:47-48 says, “Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, ‘What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in

Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’” The enemies of Jesus knew he could work miracles. During his trial, Pilate sent Jesus to King Herod. Luke 23:8 says, “Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.” Jesus did not do His miracles in a corner (Acts 26:26); he did not hide anything. But today’s faith healers often show only the success stories; they don’t show the quadriplegics who leave in wheelchairs. They don’t tell the stories of the sick folks they supposedly healed two weeks later.

Fourth, Jesus and the apostles healed people with a word or touch and prayer. They healed instantaneously and completely. They weren’t partially healed or temporarily healed; they were made whole. Jesus did not require a person to be present at a healing service to be healed. He could speak the word and heal from afar. Jesus did not require faith of everyone before He healed them; some did not believe and some could not believe, for they were dead. Jesus worked miracles in order to cause people to believe. Jesus never said that He could not work miracles because unbelievers were present. Jesus never made excuses, for He healed everyone. Some today claim to be able to heal but fail, and then they make excuses for their failures by pointing to other peoples unbelief. My friend, they never had the power to heal.

My friend, all healing is divine. It doesn’t have to be through a miraculous gift to be from God. God has given us doctors, medicines, and hospitals also to bless us, because He loves us. We should not think, then, that because the miraculous powers ceased that God has somehow abandoned us or does not love us. Paul teaches us that there is a more excellent way than the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, and that is the way of love. Love abides, even when the gifts cease. God loves us in many, many ways and blesses us every day of our lives. He gives us life, gives us hope, gives us His Word to believe, gives us the church to strengthen us, gives us our daily provisions, and gives us prayer. Prayer is a wonderful gift; it is His listening ear ready to hear our hearts. While the miraculous gifts have ceased, God still hears our prayers and answers them with the answer that is best for us. Sometimes the answer to our prayer is not immediate healing but strength to endure. Sometimes God says no, as He did to Paul, because that is what is best. Sometimes God opens doors in His time and not ours. Sometimes God gives us something more and better than we ask. One thing is sure: God loves us.

The question, then, is, “Do we love God?” Are we willing to put ourselves into His hands and live lives committed to His will and His way? I am praying that today you’ll put your loving trust in God, turn away from sin, confess the name of Christ, and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins. If you will do that, the Lord will forgive every sin, make you His child, and add you to His church. Today is the best day to give yourself to God. I pray that you will.

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