

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit and Miracles

Lesson 18

In earlier lessons we have learned that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives various spiritual gifts. We have also learned that the Holy Spirit is the one who is the source of power which enables someone to perform signs and wonders. Some liberal theologians deny that there were ever any miracles in the Bible. They believe they were added to the Bible for various reasons but never really happened. Like an illusionist, they believe there is always a natural phenomena behind what the easily deceived biblical writers perceived were miracles. Others believe that all the same kinds of miracles described in the Bible are continuing today. They profess against all proof that God is giving the exact kind of miraculous gifts today as he did in the time of Jesus and the Apostles. Still other groups believe in the total cessation of all miracles of any kind, even those fraught by the Holy Spirit apart from a person gifted by the Holy Spirit. What do the Scriptures teach? Is God still doing miracles? Do certain people still have the gift of healing? Did God intend for supernatural signs and wonders to be the norm for all Christians in every age? In this lesson we will seek to answer these questions.¹

I. DEFINITION OF A HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCED MIRACLE

- A. *Merriam–Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*: “A miracle is “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.”²
- B. *Outlines in Theology*: “A miracle is (1) an event occurring in the physical world, capable of being discerned and discriminated by the bodily senses of human witnesses, (2) of such a character that it can be rationally referred to no other cause than the immediate volition of God, (3) accompanying a religious teacher, and designed to authenticate his divine commission and the truth of his message.”¹
- C. A miracle is a supernatural act of divine intervention whereby God sets aside the laws He has created to govern His creation in order to do something extraordinary or beyond that which is normally possible apart from divine intervention. The purpose of miracles are to function as authenticating divine acts that reveal God’s appointment or approval of a person and his message. The miracles of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and the Apostles pointed to them as God’s messengers who spoke God’s Word. Jesus’ miracles pointed to Himself, verifying that He was sent from God as the Messiah and Word of God incarnate.

¹Part of this material was taken from lectures by Dr. Chuck Smith, former dean of The Master’s Seminary who has since passed into glory.

²*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

¹A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Index Created by Christian Classics Foundation., electronic ed. based on the 1972 Banner of Truth Trust reproduction of the 1879 ed. (Simpsonville SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996), 275.

II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MIRACLES

- A. Mel Tari, a missionary to Indonesia, supposedly raised the dead and turned water into wine according to the book *Like a Mighty Wind*. Yet, when investigated it was found out to be a fraud. You can read about it in the book *Indonesian Revival*, by Dr. George Peters, former professor of Missions at Dallas Theological Seminary.²
- B. Dr. William A. Nolan, a medical doctor, spent many years looking for an authentic miracle at the hands of someone who supposedly had the gift of healing and never found one. You can read about it in his book *Healing: A Doctor in Search of a Miracle*.
- C. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*: “Miracles did not happen at random throughout Scripture but occurred in three major periods: in the days of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Christ and the apostles. There were select miracles outside that scope of time, but not many. 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. Miracles occurred in the New Testament era to validate the new message the apostles preached. With the completion of the canon of Scripture the need for miracles as a validating sign disappeared; the authority of the Word of God was sufficient to validate the messenger’s word.”³
- D. Dr. Stephen Barrett in an article entitled, “Some thoughts about ‘Faith Healing’” wrote: “C. Eugene Emery, Jr., a science writer for the Providence Journal, has looked closely at the work of Reverend Ralph DiOrio, a Roman Catholic priest whose healing services attract people by the thousands. In 1987 Emery attended one of DiOrio's services and recorded the names of nine people who had been blessed during the service and nine others who had been proclaimed cured. DiOrio's organization provided ten more cases that supposedly provided irrefutable proof of the priest's ability to cure. During a six-month investigation, Emery found no evidence that any of these 28 individuals had been helped.”⁴
- E. **Mt. 24:24-25** “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 “Behold, I have told you in advance. (**See also II Thess. 2:8-12; Rev. 13:11-14; 19:20**)

²Richard Mayhue, *Divine Healing Today*, pg. 88.

³Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997, c1989), 271.

⁴Stephen Barrett, at <http://www.skeptictank.org/heal1.htm> quoting C. Eugene Emery in his article, “Are they really cured?”, *Providence Sunday Journal Magazine*, January 15, 1989.

III. **SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH MIRACLES**

A. **Signs and Wonders Are Performed by the Holy Spirit**

1. **Mt. 12:22-24, 28-29** Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. 23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." . . . 28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

2. **Acts 10:38** "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

B. **Historical Survey of Miracles**

Major Periods of Miracles						
Creation Miracles for 7 days	No recorded miracles for 2,000 years except Enoch's translation into heaven	Moses and Joshua perform Miracles for about 50 years	From Judges 1398 BC to 875 BC about 525 years saw only a few isolated miracles like Samson, Gideon, Witch of Endor, glory in the temple.	Elijah and Elisha do many miracles in a specific place for a limited time, from about 875 BC to 800 BC 75 years	No miracles for 833 years from about 800 BC to 33 AD except for a few such as Jonah, Daniel, and those associated with Christ's birth	Intense period of miracles from 33 AD to about 68 AD performed by Jesus, the Apostles, and a few select individuals for about 35 years .
short time of miracles	<i>virtually no miracles</i>	intense time of miracles	<i>a few isolated miracles</i>	intense period of miracles	<i>a few isolated miracles</i>	intense period of miracles
The historical survey tells us many important things, 1) Miracles were never intended to be normal for every place and age, 2) since creation there has only been about 250 years where miracles were fairly regular but it was always in isolated locations for a limited amount of time, and 3) God always used a few select individuals to perform miracles not a majority of people.						

C. **New Testament Miracles Were Limited**

1. *Jesus didn't always perform miracles* – **Mt. 12:39**; But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet.

2. *Jesus Often Did Miracles in Response to Faith – Mt. 13:58* And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.
3. *Miracles referred to in the past tense – Heb. 2:3-4* 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.

D. **Miraculous Sign Gifts Were Signs of an Apostle**

1. **Mt. 10:1** Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
2. **II Cor. 12:12** The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

E. **Thoughts to Consider about Miracles Continuing Today**

1. If everyone or many should be doing miracles Paul wouldn't have called them "signs of an Apostle."
2. When you read the book of Acts you also discover that Paul performed fewer and fewer miracles as the church grew and the New Testament was completed.
3. If you study church history you will also discover that miracles were not normative for the church in any age.

F. **True Healing Is Spiritual and Happens in Salvation**

1. **Isa. 53:3-5** He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.
2. **I Pet. 2:24-25** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

3. **II Cor. 4:16-18** Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

G. God Purposefully Uses Sickness and Doesn't Want Everyone Physically Well

1. **Ex. 4:11** The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"
2. **Deut. 32:39** 'See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.
3. **II Sam. 12:15** So Nathan went to his house. Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick.
4. **I Cor. 11:30** For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

H. Godly People in New Testament Times Were Not Healed

1. **Acts 9:36-37** Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. 37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died.
2. **Phil. 2:25-27** But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; 26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.
3. **I Tim. 5:23** No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.
4. **II Tim. 4:20** Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.

I. Present Day Supposed Healing Gifts Compared to the Word of God

Biblical Miracles	Supposed present day miracles
Believers and unbelievers healed (Gen. 12:10-20; II Kings 5:1-14; Dan. 4:28-37)	Heal believers only
Healing immediate with no relapse ⁵ (Mt. 8:3, 13, 15; 9:6-7, 22, 29-30; 15:30-31; 17:18; 20:34; etc.)	Healing partial with relapse
Everyone who came was healed (Mt. 4:23-25; 8:16; 9:35; 12:15; 14:35; etc.)	Some who came were supposedly healed
All kinds of healing took place (see above)	Only some kinds of healing
Those healed didn't always have faith (Mt. 8:1-4; Lk. 17:11-19; Jn. 5:1-9 etc.)	You must have faith to receive a supposed miracle
Healing was undeniable (Acts 4:15-17)	Healing is unverifiable
Healing was not prearranged (Mt. 4:23-25; Jn. 11:1-44)	Healing services are always prearranged
Healing was spontaneous (Acts 3:7-8; 14:8-10; 20:9-12)	Supposed healing only occurs in a controlled environment

IV. ERRORS CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MIRACLES

- A. Error – All believers can be physically healed in this life if they have enough faith.
- B. Error – God wants all Christians to be physically healthy.
- C. Error – Miracles are the normal for every age and every church should have people with gifts of healing.
- D. Error – To deny the present reality of miraculous sign gifts in the church is to doubt the power of God.
- E. Error – Historical Christianity has always believed in the continuation of miraculous sign gifts.
- F. Error – What is happening in many churches today is the same thing that happened in New Testament times.

⁵There are three cases of delayed healing in Jesus' ministry but when the healing took place it was immediate and the person was completely healed (see Matt. 8:22-26; Luke 17:11-19; John 9:1-7).

V. APPLICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MIRACLES

- A. The Holy Spirit can and still does miraculously heal people at times, but not through people that have the gift of healing.
- B. The Holy Spirit still does miracles every day by transforming people into new creatures in Christ by the preaching of the gospel.
- C. God can do anything He wants except those things which are contrary to His revealed nature and will.
- D. It is okay to pray for healing and the miracle of salvation.
- E. When we pray for someone to get healed and they do not get healed or get healed when we hope they would receive healing, it doesn't mean that person doesn't have enough faith.
- F. Everyone dies and every Christian lives even if they die.
- G. Personal healing and physical comfort are not as important as personal salvation and a deep relationship with God.

“You know, dear friends, when the Holy Spirit was given in the earliest ages he showed his presence by certain miraculous signs. Some of those who received the Holy Spirit spake with tongues; others began to prophesy, and a third class received the gifts of healing, so that wherever they laid their hands disease fled before them. I am sure that if these powers were given now in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit and your believing, you would all be anxious to possess them. I can hardly imagine a single Christian who would not put to himself the enquiry, “Have I received the Holy Spirit in that fashion?” You would want to be healing, or to be speaking with tongues, or to be working miracles by which you could benefit your fellow-men and glorify God: would you not? Now, be it never forgotten that those works of the Holy Spirit which are permanent must assuredly be of greater value than those which were transitory. We cannot suppose that the Holy Ghost brought forth the best wine at first, and that his operations gradually deteriorated. It is a rule of the kingdom to keep the best wine to the last, and therefore I conclude that you and I are not left to partake of the dregs, but that those works of the Holy Spirit which are at this time vouchsafed to the Church of God are every way as valuable as those earlier miraculous gifts which have departed from us.”⁶

⁶Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons*: “Receiving the Holy Spirit,” *Volume 30*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998).