

Christians Gone Wild!
1st Corinthians, week 28
Spiritual Gifts II: Faith, Healing, Miracles, Discernment (1 Corinthians 12:9–10)
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Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.
1 Corinthians 12:1

We are in the second week of a seven-week study of the spiritual gifts. This week we will examine the gifts of faith, healing, miracles, and discernment. We will be skipping the gift of prophecy and the entire sermon on September 10 will be dedicated to that subject because it is so widely misunderstood. As a word of preface, the gifts we are studying this week are inextricably connected to the freedom of God. When it comes to such things as healings and miracles, some people like to say that God must heal them, whereas others say that God, in effect, cannot do miraculous things anymore; they are either saying that God must do something or that God cannot do something. Both of these positions should be rejected because God is free to do as He sees fit.

Faith

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Defined: The gift of faith is the ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it even though it seems impossible to most people.

General makeup: Those with the gift of faith trust God in difficult, even impossible, situations, when others are ready to give up. These people are often visionaries who dream big dreams, pray big prayers, and attempt big things for Jesus. These people tend to be optimistic, hopeful, persevering, change-oriented, and future-focused. These people also tend to be very convincing about the truth of Scripture because they themselves are so convinced of the truth and power of God and His Word.

Seen in Jesus' ministry: In one sense, Jesus' entire life and ministry could be summarized as one of faith because He continually and perfectly trusted in God, the Father in all things.

Illustrated biblically: Paul (Acts 27:21–25), Stephen, who was “full of faith” (Acts 6:5), and Jesus' mother, Mary, who trusted God to give her a child though she was a virgin (Luke 1:26–38). Hebrews 11 also lists a great number of Christians who had the gift of faith.

Do you have this gift? (1) Do you view obstacles as opportunities and trust God for the impossible? (2) Do you find yourself frequently boasting about the power of God and what you have seen Him do? (3) Do you get motivated by new ministries? (4) Do you find yourself feeling opposed to anyone who expresses that something cannot be done or accomplished? (5) Do you find other believers coming to you for hope when they face a seemingly overwhelming trial or task? (6) Do you have an effective prayer ministry with many wonderful answers to prayers that were impossible from the human point of view?

Healing

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Defined: The gift of healing is the ability to call on God to heal the sick through supernatural means for the purpose of revealing God.

General makeup: Those with the gift of healing trust that God can heal the sick and pray in faith for the physical restoration of those in need. These people see healing as a sign that God uses to reveal His power to people so that many will come to believe in Jesus. People with this gift do not see someone healed every time they ask God, since healing is something that God alone decides to do (e.g., Galatians 4:13–14; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20).

Seen in Jesus' ministry: Matthew 4:23–24 and 9:35 speak of Jesus' many healings.

Illustrated biblically: The Twelve had the gift of healing (Matthew 10:1), as did the Seventy (Luke 10:8–9), Peter (Acts 5:14–16), and Paul (Acts 3:1–8). Additionally, church elders are supposed to pray for the sick so that God might heal them (James 5:13–16).

Common errors regarding healing: (1) Some say that the more supernatural gifts such as healing ceased to operate at the end of the first century, but the church fathers from the second and third century report that such things as healing continued to occur in their day. (2) Some say that if a testimony of a healing is given, it is to be believed, but a healing also needs to be verified (e.g., by a doctor) to help prove what God has done. (3) Some say that healing should be done in a church service, but there is no record of this happening in the New Testament, which may mean that healing, like some other gifts, is not best used during a church service. (4) Some extreme groups teach that since God can heal, Christians should not use a doctor, but the Bible does not speak against doctors and doctors like Luke used their medical ability as part of their pastoral ministry to help people (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). (5) Some say that by walking in faith and not sinning that no Christian needs to ever be sick, but Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25–27), Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23), Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), and Paul (1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 11:30; 12:5, 7–10; Galatians 4:13) each had sickness that was not healed despite the fact they deeply loved God and walked with Jesus faithfully.

Do you have this gift? (1) Do you have a deep compassion for people who are sick? (2) Do you have a deep conviction that God can heal anyone He chooses? (3) Do you enjoy praying for people who are sick? (4) Have you seen God heal someone? (5) When God heals someone are you excited because it helps to reveal His power to others? (6) Do you long for the coming of God's Kingdom when there will be an end to all sickness since sin and its effects will be no more?

Miracles

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Defined: The gift of miracles is the ability to call on God to do supernatural acts that reveal His power.

General makeup: People with the gift of miracles see God show up in extraordinary ways from daily little events to major public displays. Examples from the Bible include seeing demons cast out of people, nature obeying God's authority, and the dead being raised. Obviously, these sorts of things are uncommon and do not happen regularly, otherwise they would not be viewed as miraculous. People with this gift do not chase signs and wonders, but they do expect signs and wonders to follow God's people who follow Jesus.

Seen in Jesus' ministry: Acts 2:22 says Jesus performed many miracles and John 20:20–31 says that Jesus' many miracles were to prove He was God. Jesus commanded nature (Mark 4:35–41), cast out demons (Mark 5:1–13; Matthew 12:22), walked on water (Mark 6:45–51), turned water into wine (John 2:1–11), and fed over 5,000 people with one boy's lunch (John 6:1–14).

Illustrated biblically: The apostles did “many miraculous signs” (Acts 2:43), Stephen did “great” miracles (Acts 6:8), and Paul did “extraordinary” miracles at Ephesus (Acts 19:11). Also, Paul cast out demons (Acts 16:16–18), God blinded a sorcerer for Paul (Acts 13:6–12), and there were many miracles surrounding the ministries of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.

Common errors regarding miracles: (1) Some people who claim to have this gift use it to exalt themselves, but the gift exists to exalt God and spread the name of Jesus. (2) Some say that the most godly people will have this gift, but even John the Baptizer never performed a miracle (John 10:41). (3) Some Christians are prone to chase signs and wonders, but Jesus said that it is a wicked and evil thing to seek a sign (Luke 11:29). (4) Some people think that a sign/miracle is guaranteed to prove to a non-Christian that Jesus is real, but even Jesus said that some people would never believe in Him even if they saw a miracle (John 4:48).

Do you have this gift? (1) Do you truly believe that God can do the impossible? (2) When you read of the many miracles in the Bible are you encouraged because you love to see God made known in ways that cannot be ignored? (3) Have you seen someone freed from demonic oppression? (4) Have you seen God perform miracles? (5) When you hear of or see miracles is your faith in God greatly increased? (6) Do you use stories of God's miracles to help prove to others that Jesus is God?

Discernment

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:10

Defined: The spiritual gift of discernment is the ability to quickly perceive whether such things as people, events, or beliefs are from God or Satan.

General makeup: People with the gift of discernment know that Satan and his demons disguise themselves as holy (1 Corinthians 11:14–15). They also know that Satan empowers counterfeit miracles (Exodus 7:11–22; 8:7; Matthew 7:21–23; 2 Timothy 3:8) to deceive people (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and that he empowers false teachers (2 Peter 2:1), false prophets (Matthew 7:15), false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13), and false doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3; 6:3).

Seen in Jesus' ministry: Jesus was able to know the presence of Satan (Matthew 4:1–11), see when someone was influenced by Satan (Luke 22:31), and know when someone's words were influenced by Satan (Matthew 16:23)

Illustrated biblically: John (1 John 4:1), Paul (Acts 16:16–18), Peter (Acts 5:1–11), and the disciples (Matthew 10:1) all demonstrated the gift of discernment.

Do you have this gift? (1) Have you felt a special responsibility to protect the truth of God's Word by exposing that which is wrong? (2) Do you often make a swift evaluation of someone or something that was said that others did not see, but yet proved to be correct? (3) Do you have a solid understanding of Scripture and a sensitivity to the leading of God the Holy Spirit? (4) Are you keenly aware of moral sin and doctrinal heresy? (5) Can you read a book or hear a teacher and almost

immediately uncover any false teaching? (6) Do you have an awareness of demonic presence and how to help people be free of demons?

Verses for next week: 1 Corinthians 12:27–31; Ephesians 4:11–13