

Miracles
Abuse, False Signs
and Nonuse

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See also *Miracles: From God or Man?* by Jimmy Jividen

Review

- Purpose: revelation and confirmation of God's Word (Mk. 16:20) for salvation
- Temporary nature of miracles; lasting until:
 - “all the truth” was revealed (Jn. 16:13)
 - “the perfect thing comes” (1 Cor. 13:10)
 - “we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13)

Abuse of the Miraculous

- Most of the information about miracles involves correcting abuse (1 Cor. 12-14)
- The way the Corinthians were using their spiritual gifts was not authorized
- They were acting like pagans:
 - “You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the mute idols, however you were led” (1 Cor. 12:2)

Abuse of the Miraculous

- Like the pagans, they were conducting confused and irrational worship
- Some would be talking at the same time with no concern for being understood
- If no one understood, no one could be edified (1 Cor. 14:26)
- Such activities, resembling pagan worship must be stopped

Abuse of the Miraculous

- Just as the Greek mystery religions would encourage their followers to engage in ecstatic utterances as being evidence that the gods were in them, the Corinthians were abusing the gift of speaking in other languages by not caring if the hearers understood
- Irrational speaking was not to be tolerated in the assemblies (1 Cor. 14:28)

1 Corinthians 13

- Paul shows that the miraculous spiritual gifts were passing away
- In getting so wrapped up in the showiness of miraculously speaking in other languages—which would cease—the Corinthians were neglecting unselfish love
- The most glamorous miraculous gifts are nothing without love

1 Corinthians 14

- Paul corrects the abuse of miraculous gifts which were causing confusion
- The Corinthians had become so engrossed in the externals of the miraculous gifts that they had forgotten their purpose of edification
- Prayer and praise must be understood by the worshipper (vv. 14-15) and the one who hears it (vv. 16-19)

Abuse of the Miraculous

- The abuse of miraculous spiritual gifts happened at Corinth after the need for them began to decline
- Miracles would eventually cease
- With their passing there should have been no temptation to make desires for the miraculous the substance of one's commitment to Christ

False Signs

- Jesus warned that false prophets with great signs would lead many astray and not to believe them (Mt. 24:23-24)
- John warns not to believe everyone who claims to have God's Spirit (1 Jn. 4:1)
- We must not allow a false prophet to counterfeit the holy with the profane

Recognizing Error

- They disguise themselves (2 Cor. 11:13-15)
- They preach another gospel (Gal. 1:6-8)
- They deceive for gain (Titus 1:10-11)
- They teach false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
- They claim to have visions (Col. 2:18-19)

Matthew 7:22-23

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Matthew 7:22-23

- Jesus predicted that some would claim to follow him and claim to do mighty works in his name
- He refused to acknowledge them as his disciples
- Jesus' prediction took place in the first century and every generation since

Contemporary Claims

- Claims of modern-day miracles are not new
- Contemporary claims concerning miracles are not different from pagan claims
- Modern-day claims of the miraculous are counterfeits and cannot be proven
- We should not be passive or tolerant to such claims or excuse them for any reason

Contemporary Claims

- It is wrong to claim the name of Christ as the authority for a so-called “miracle” today
- Contemporary frauds claiming to be miracle-workers should be pointed out in order to warn people of their deception
- It is not a sign of weak faith to question the miraculous claims of modern-day religion
- Mature faith wants scriptural evidence
- Heed God warnings about false prophets

Nonuse: Uncured Sickness

- No study of the miraculous healings in the New Testament would be complete without consideration of individuals who were not healed of illnesses
- Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30)
- Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23)
- Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20)

Nonuse: Uncured Sickness

- Paul did not cure himself

“but you know that it was because of a bodily illness (lit. “weakness of the flesh”) that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus” (Gal. 4:13-14)

Nonuse: Uncured Sickness

- Paul also had a thorn in the flesh which God refused to remove
- Though Paul prayed three times, God did not heal him (2 Cor. 12:7-10)
- Why were these individuals not healed?
- Miracles were not performed for ease, comfort or for selfish reasons
- Purpose of miracles: confirm God's Word with the ultimate goal of salvation