

Are Signs, Wonders, and Miracles for Today?

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, May 1, 2022

Well, before we begin our sermon time this morning, I just want to mention we are in the middle of a series in the book of Hebrews, which I've told you before has been called the Leviticus of the New Testament. Partially because it's as deep as the book of Leviticus at times. But it's also called that because it shows us that Christ came to fulfill all the things that Leviticus talks about, like the law and the commandments and the statutes. He came to complete all the rituals and ceremonies and traditions of the Jews by being our perfect sacrifice. He became the One and Only Lamb of God to such a degree that He kept the law in our place, so we wouldn't have to, which is a beautiful thing, because we can't keep the law anyway; the demands are too high for us to follow. So Christ came to do that for us, which is what we're going to be looking at in the book this morning. And if you would, please turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews.

And as you're doing that, I want to remind you that we are having several baptisms coming up at the end of the service. After the sermon is over, we'll have a time of prayer, sing a few songs, and then we'll watch as several of our young people are baptized in the tank right behind me here on the stage. And I'm glad we're doing that today because it really illustrates the theme of this book which is that Jesus can save you. He can deliver you from sin, no matter what stage of life you're in, whether you're young or old, rich or poor, black or white, male or female. All the people who are being baptized today are young people. I know we have a lot of young families in our church today. And that can be pretty hard work raising kids at times, because you don't think they're listening to you. But I want to remind you that they are and this is going to be evidence of that. They are paying attention. And you can tell because they heard the gospel at home before they ever heard it in this church. And so I just want to say that to encourage you, whatever you're doing, keep up the good work. Don't lose heart, your kids are listening.

If you would just read Hebrews Chapter Two with me. This is our passage for today when it tells us this:

For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 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.

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere saying, "What is man that You remember him? Or the son of man, that you are concerned about him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands; You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left

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nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who has made for a little while longer than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting, for whom for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in Him."

We will stop the reading there. When you go through this passage, like we just did, one common theme that you see in here is that of salvation. You see the word salvation comes up several times in the passage. You can see it in verse three and verse 10. And also right above this and chapter one, verse 14. You can also see other terms like "angels" and "Jesus" and "sacrifices" mentioned in here. It talks about "transgressions" and "disobedience" and "sin" and "sanctification". Because the point of this passage is found back up in verse three, when it says, "How will we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" In other words, how will we stay out of hell if we do that? And the answer is that you can't, there's no way to stay out of hell if you neglect all the wonderful things Christ has done for you. So you shouldn't do that. You should be sure to keep your focus on the cross. And not only that, but verse four says that the message of salvation was preceded by signs and wonders and various miracles. And the point he's making there is that many of these people saw that most of the people he was writing to were eye witnesses of the miracles, because they lived in the first century. So he says that you shouldn't neglect your salvation for that reason, either. Because it's the dumbest thing in the world to watch the apostles do all these miracles, and then still go to hell and be lost. So you want to respond in a different way.

Just to say a few words about this, I told you last week, depending on where you grew up in church, you may not have heard a lot about the spiritual gifts. Because they've been so distorted in some circles today, a lot of Christians have chosen to avoid them for fear of being swept up in the madness, so they have decided to stay away from the topic. They don't want to be taken in by all the confusion, and I don't blame them. I mean, some of the things that are being done in the name of these things are pretty creepy, aren't they? They're so twisted that it freaks you out. But to be honest, there's no reason to stay away from them. Because the Bible does say a lot about the gifts. So we don't have to hide in fear; we can confront them head on. In fact, I'm still new to the nation of Canada, so I don't know how much the charismatic movement has swept into this country. But I can tell you in the states where I where I come from, I mean, all you have to do is go down to your local Christian bookstore and you can see it for yourself, because a lot of them have books on money. They say that if you believe in God, He will give you a gift to make you rich. Now I'm 41 years old, I have never found that gift. But if you just believe, He'll make gold fall down from the sky and you can buy the mansion and the Rolls Royce of your dreams.

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It doesn't stop there because you can just turn on the TV and there they'll tell you that if you believe God will give you the gift of healing, you'll never be sick again. He'll zap you with power to the point that you can overcome any illness out of that bed and out of that wheelchair out of that stretcher or gurney or cancer so that you can just fire all the doctors in the room. You can just go to a Benny Hinn crusade instead.

If that's not enough, you could stop by the local church and hear them saying if you believe, God will do something better than that, because He'll make you speak in tongues. He'll give you a gift that'll make you lose control and roll across the floor and hoop and holler and shout and chase the devil up a tree until you begin to utter strange, wonderful things from your mouth that nobody understands. We've all seen that kind of thing before anyway, you don't have to be from the States, you guys have seen that as well. Because the ideas are endless with this sort of thing. It's permeated the Christian world, which means that you have to talk about it, whether you want to or not, you've got to address it, because it's going to find its way into the church, eventually. Somebody's going to bring it in here.

So the best way to do it is to open up the scriptures and see what they say. Because when you do that you find there are several ways these people get their theology wrong. And this is all by way of introduction here. And I say this respectfully. None of this is done out of a spirit of bitterness. But when these people talk this way, whether they realize it or not, there's several ways they abuse the name of God. One is in the area of Revelation. They say that God is speaking to them when He's not. And they claim that He's talking to them outside the pages of Scripture, and has given them a special word when that's not the case. Because they say yes, God is speaking to me through the Bible. And yes, He's talking to me through the Word. And yes, He's ministering to my soul through the church, but that's not enough. I need more. And that doesn't cut it because I need something better. God needs to give me a dream. God needs to give me a vision. God needs to give me a hallucination where I roll around on the floor and go crazy.

Which is dangerous, because let's be honest, you can make God say anything you want to in an environment like that. Roll around on the floor long enough, and you can let your imagination go wild, to the point that you don't know if it's God or the devil talking to you. So many people get into this type of thing because they want the sense of revelation so bad, they'll move heaven and earth to get it. In my work this week, I found one author who said they met Jesus personally one night, and he came to speak with him while they were watching Laverne and Shirley on TV. They were amazed because he was six feet tall and had brown hair and looked handsome. He was like the perfect man, despite the fact that Isaiah 53 Verse two says that He had nothing in his appearance that should attract us to Him. He wasn't handsome at all. If you saw Jesus in a photograph, you wouldn't even know who He was. But this author said he knew who he was. He could spot Christ in a photograph, because God spoke to him. And what God said to him was better than what God said to Isaiah. This is one way the name, the name of God is abused in these circles.

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Another one is in the area of experience. A lot of people put experience above the teaching of Scripture. When they get involved in this, they put the visions and dreams over the Word of God itself, because they say if the two things clash, the Bible must be wrong. If my experience is butting heads with what the book of Isaiah says, Isaiah must be incorrect, because how could my experience be wrong? The idea is that if I feel like God is speaking to me, then God is speaking to me. And if I sense He's moving, then He's moving. And you can't say anything against it. I also came across a story this week of a woman who told her husband that God was speaking to her and telling her that she needed to divorce him. And the Lord had given her an impression in her spirit that the marriage was over and she needed to love another man, despite the fact that in Matthew it says that God hates divorce. Matthew five, verse 22, says, "But I say to you, everyone who divorces their spouse, except on the ground of sexual immorality, commits adultery," but she did it in any way because she didn't care about that. It was all about her feelings.

This leads to another way that people abuse the Lord in this type of thing, and that is in the area of feelings or emotions, because they think if it feels good, God is in it. And if it appears right in my heart, it's right, no questions asked. Because they believe that the Spirit speaks to us primarily through one thing, and that is this, and He commands us through one area, and that's the heart, not the head, so that's what we have to be listening to. Because in order to do that, you have to look out for His nudges and urges and promptings all the time, and you have to be looking for His impressions of the Spirit. So you go around your entire Christian life saying, is that you Lord? Or is that you, Lord? Are you speaking to me now? Are you doing it now? I grew up in a church where people did this sort of thing. And you would often hear stories about someone praying, Lord, if You want me to marry Sarah, then please have Sarah wear a red dress on Sunday, and make me happy about it. And Sarah wore a red dress on Sunday, and I was happy about it. And you know what, here comes a wedding. We're going to get married nevermind the fact that Sarah doesn't like me very much. And she won't return my calls. Or they would pray Lord, if You want me to go to the mission field, please make that leaf fall off the tree and give me peace. So the leaf falls off a tree and I get peace. So what's going to happen? I'm gonna I'm off to China. But the idea is our emotions are some kind of radar that lead us to God.

Now we don't want to make light of this because the emotions do play a part in the Christian life. The Bible tells you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The "heart" comes at the front of the list. Which means you can't show up at church like a robot or a machine with no passion at all for what you're doing. You need to get emotional about it. You need to feel something for Jesus Christ. That's part of what it means to worship. And the emotions play part a part in your conscience as well. Because when you feel bad about something, it's oftentimes because you are bad, and you're in sin. And the Holy Spirit is working through your soul to draw that out of you. But the trouble with feelings is that they can be misleading, can't they?

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They can trick you because sometimes they're nothing more than indigestion from the two pieces of pie you had for supper the night before. And you don't want to base your life on that. I've counseled people that have ruined their life just because they made a decision just based on emotions. They didn't like that woman. They didn't like that man. They got married and it became a disaster. But the point is that all of this is an issue today; this problem of distorting the gifts is a real concern for the church. If you don't believe me, just ask the average person in Chilliwack about their relationship with God and listen to what they say, because a lot of them will tell you that the Lord told me this, and the Lord told me that that's how they became a Christian. They don't mention the gospel, they don't mention the cross. They don't mention their sin. They don't mention grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. God just said something. Or if you ask them about their testimony, they'll do the same thing, because they'll tell you about a time when they were hurting, or suffering, and a song came on the radio that made them feel better. So now they're saved, never mind the fact that that song had nothing to do with anything in the Bible.

This is why the scripture says so much about discernment in these things if you just want to write some of these verses down. First John four verse one says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they're from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." That is a very important verse for this. John says that if you want to be a Christian, this is what you have to do, you have to test the spirits. You have to scrutinize them. You can't believe everything you see. You can't treat every idea like it's a good idea. Some things are bad, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Not a few, but many. There are many bad pastors out there. I wish it wasn't that way, it would make my job so much easier. But Satan is constantly pumping and pumping and pumping false doctrine into the church. And you can't let him do that, there needs to be some kind of screen in your mind for these things.

First Timothy four verse one says it the same way, when it tells us that the Spirit explicitly says in latter times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits, and doctrines of demons. And what are we supposed to do about it? You need to guard your life and doctrine closely. That means salvation does not come just by feeling things. It comes from guarding things. And it doesn't come when you just show up at church and shut your brain off and unscrew it at the neck and put it under your pew. It comes when you keep your brain turned on. I don't have to tell you this is one of the greatest problems in the church today. There is so much mindlessness going on. There is so much gullibility among Christians, because some people will believe anything, so long as it's taught passionately. And they'll listen to any idea so long as it's sincere, but they forget that the devil is passionate too. And the demons pawn themselves off as being sincere. So Paul says you have to be careful, because you don't want to give into that.

First Thessalonians five, verse 19 says, "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good." And that's a good way to balance these things. Because Paul says don't quench the Spirit. In other words, while you need to guard against

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these things, and be protective, you don't need to be cynical all the time. You don't want to say I don't believe the spirit can work in people's lives. That's not true. He absolutely works in people's lives. But at the same time, you can't think everything is good that's going on in the church, because it's not. You need to examine things, which is what we're going to talk about today. Because I don't know about you, but I read all this stuff and I wonder well, how do we do that? I mean, how do we? How do we balance this idea of not quenching the spirit? And at the same time guarding and protecting? I mean, does the Lord still speak through any of these things today? Does He still do signs and wonders and miracles in the church? I mean, okay, some people abuse these things. That's true. And some people are handling it the wrong way. But there's other people that are more balanced in this; not everyone who claims to speak in tongues or prophesy, or heal people does it by rolling around in the floor.

So what about the normal people? What are we supposed to think about that? And another question you have is, what about all the reports from the mission field today? I don't know if you keep up with missionaries. But when you do, you often hear stories about the Lord doing wonderful things in the jungles of Asia, or the deserts of Africa or the rainforests of South America, where the Bible isn't there and the gospel is not preached. So what are we supposed to make of that? If it's not taking place in Canada, maybe it's taking place over there? Or what about all the crazy stuff you see on television today? I mean, what about all the claims the Bethel movement is making and the vineyard movement is making in the word of faith movement is making? What about all the signs that Benny Hin is doing and Kenneth Copeland is doing and Todd White and Paula White, where person after person after person was healed. These questions are endless with this type of thing; we could go on and on.

What I want to do this morning is just take a few minutes to address some of this. We can't get into all of it, but I want to look with you at two areas that show us that the sign gifts have ceased in the New Testament. We are going to get back into our study of the book of Hebrews next week and continue the verse-by-verse examination of it, but before I do that, I want to set some time aside, in order to look at this, because let's be honest, God still does miracles today. Amen? I can't say that enough. He still does signs and wonders. We're about to have a baptism service in a moment where several of our young people are going to stand up here and tell you about the miracle God did in their heart. They're going to talk to you about the way that He's changed them. And as Richard said, that is a sign. We also know that God still speaks to us, He hasn't stopped doing that either. Because this is how you became a Christian, you were saved when the Lord spoke to you and you answered, You were born again when He called out to your heart, and He called out to your soul, and you heard Him. But at the same time, I don't have to tell you that a lot of things that pass for God's voice today are not. And there's a lot of things that profess to be miracles that are nothing more than a lie. So we want to talk about how to address this. And in order to do that, we're going to look at two areas that show us that the sign gifts have ceased.

The first one is the Bible. So the first area that shows you that these gifts have ceased is the New Testament or the Bible, which means that the Scripture itself makes that claim. It's not something that I'm making up today. Or some idea that's popped into our heads, you find it in the Word of God. You

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don't see this in the book of Hebrews, because it doesn't go into detail over this, but you find it in another book. So if you would, turn over to the book of First Corinthians chapter 13. And while you're turning there, I want to give you some background on the gifts because it ties into this discussion. But the first time that gifts are ever found in the Bible is in Acts chapter two when the Holy Spirit comes down on the day of Pentecost, and He allows the apostles to speak in tongues. The reason He does it in tongues, and not some other gift is to show the church that God is not just speaking in Hebrew anymore. Now He's speaking in other languages as well. For all of 1000s of years, anytime someone heard the voice of God, they wrote it down in the Hebrew language. But now, with the start of the church, the spirit is showing us the Lord doesn't just operate that way anymore. He's saving other people too. And He does it through these languages. I mean, this was not the gift of gibberish, as some would say today. It was the gift of tongues, and it wasn't the gift of babbling. It really was the miracle of another language because Acts two says when it happened Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia all heard the disciples speak about the mighty deeds of God in their own dialect. And as a result, they believed. And the reason they believed is because they knew the apostles were not cultured men, and yet they're doing this. They understood these guys were not educated people, they were poor, illiterate fishermen, and yet they were speaking a dozen languages at once. And therefore they knew that it had to be a miracle. If they were just babbling like a bunch of crazy people, they would not have been impressed by that.

After that, the next miracle you see with the sign gifts is when Peter heals a lame man in the chapter right after that. Acts three tells us how Peter went to the temple and before he could go in, he was confronted by a man who asked him for money. And Peter said, "Silver and gold I have none. But such as I have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk." And the man did it. Instantly he began leaping and jumping and running right away, which is fascinating because who taught him how to do that? Where did he learn how to run? He had never run his entire life. It was a miracle. And he didn't wait for the miracle. He got it immediately. He didn't work for it by driving down to a crusade and paying \$100 and going up on stage in front of some miracle worker. Peter just healed him and that was it; he just said the word and the man changed instantly. The reason that was important is because it shows that the disciples have now gone from speaking in tongues to healing people. They've moved from a gift of speech to a gift of mercy, because the Spirit is piling miracle on top of miracle hear, sign after sign after sign to the point of this city of Jerusalem was soon so full of these things, that the Jews started persecuting them for it. They had so many miracles occurring and so many people getting saved, that they began to attack them. And as a result, the church scattered and they took the miracles all across the globe.

Acts chapter eight says Philip took the sign gifts to the land of Samaria and evangelized them and they spoke in tongues. This showed that the Samaritans were getting the gift; He was crossing racial boundaries. Then an Acts chapter 10, Peter evangelizes a Roman Centurion. And the same thing happens there. He and his family speak in tongues to show that the Romans are getting this now. And then Paul began to take the sign gifts to Antioch and Philippi and Thessalonica, in Athens and Ephesus

and Colossi until they ended up in the church in Corinth, which is the book that I just asked you to turn to. They land among the Corinthian people, which was quite a gong show because Corinth was known as being a pretty sinful place, kind of like the Las Vegas of the first century, so that everything they did they did poorly, and every sign they practiced, they messed it up, which is what you see in chapter 12, verse one, if you look there, it says, Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord, accepted by the Holy Spirit. Now, that may be a little bit hard to decipher. But apparently there were some in the church of Corinth, who were trying to practice the gifts the wrong way, because they were doing it by blurting out whatever came into their minds. We often think the gift of tongues is primarily a Christian thing, but it's not because the pagans had their own version of this at the time, they would get drunk and babble incoherently in their worship services, or they would take drugs and dance around in order to worship Zeus, or Poseidon or Hermes. And as they did, they would speak in gibberish, like a lot of Christians do today. They would just babble. And as they babble, they would say awful things sometimes, as bad is the phrase, Jesus is accursed, or something like that. And Paul says, You can't do that. That's like worshipping a mute idol. And at the end of the chapter in verse 29, he says, this is another way they were abusing the gifts. He says, "All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healing, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? But earnestly desire the greater gifts." And what he's saying there is that some in the church were wanting all the spectacular gifts now. They were wanting to be apostles, and healers, and prophets, and Paul says it doesn't work that way.

In order to look at this issue some more, Paul goes on to make two statements in First Corinthians 13, in order to straighten them out on the gifts. And I want to walk you through these. The first one is that love is more important than the gifts. If you look in chapter 12, verse 31, he says, "But earnestly desire the greater gifts, and I show you a still more excellent way. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and knowledge; and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I have nothing." If you notice, Paul begins the statement by giving a hypothetical statement when he says, "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels." In other words, he's using the word *if* to show you that we don't know there's a gift of a tongue of angels. We have no idea that there's a hidden dialect. They speak with God. Every time the angels come to earth, they use our tongue, not another tongue. But Paul says even if there was such a thing, and I didn't love people, it would be for nothing; it would be pointless. And he says, "If I knew all mysteries and knowledge." These are two more hypothetical gifts because there was a gift of mysteries, but there was no gift to know all mysteries. And there was a gift of knowledge but there was no gift of all knowledge; God alone as that. But he says even *if* I had that as well and I didn't have love, it would make me a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. Some of you will remember the first sermon I ever preached the Grace Fellowship Church was on this passage. In order to illustrate this idea, I pulled out a pot and pan and started banging it around to illustrate this idea, because

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Paul says all the gifts are useless if you don't love one another. Some of you started calling me the banging preacher after I did that. Thankfully, the name didn't stick. But Paul makes a good point here. We all know people in church who are very gifted people, and they have a lot of talents in the areas of music or teaching. But the moment they start talking to somebody, they tear them down. And the moment they open their mouth, it all falls to pieces. So Paul says you can't have that sort of thing in the church. Which is why he goes on to say in verse four that love is patient, love is kind is not jealous, he's walking you through the importance of these things.

And that leads to a second statement he makes about the gifts. And we're going to spend more time on this one because it ties into this issue. And that is that love is more permanent than the gifts. He tells you love is more important, but he also tells you love is more permanent. Because if you look in verse eight, here's where the issue of cessationism comes in. He says, "Love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away with. And if there are tongues, they will cease. And if there is knowledge, it will be done away with." Now, as you read that, one thing jumps out at you is the duration issue of these gifts, because Paul says prophecy will be done away with and tongues will cease and knowledge will also be done away with because there will be a time when those gifts come to a close. The reason he mentions this here is to show you that whereas those gifts will do that, love will not cease. And whereas prophecies, tongues and knowledge will one day vanish from the earth, love will be different because it never fails. So if you're going to focus on anything in the church, focus on that. But he mentioned prophecies in here. And that refers to a gift of receiving a message directly from the Lord himself or a Word from Him. It doesn't come through Scripture, it doesn't come from the pages of this book, because it comes straight from the throne of heaven. That's what prophecy is. And when he mentions tongues, he's referring to kind of the same idea, because tongues is a special message as well. And it's a word from the Lord, except that you get it in a different language. Tongues was a very unusual gift, because you just received it in a foreign dialect, which is why First Corinthians 14 says you needed an interpreter. Because sometimes you would get a word from the Lord, speak in a tongue, and you wouldn't even know what you were saying. So you had to have someone to interpret it for you. It's the same way with a gift of knowledge which refers to the revelation of a mystery, or a secret, that God has told no one else but you. And the idea is that God gives it to you. So you hear it and share it with others. You get this gift of knowledge in order to impart it to the church. But the point is that all these gifts have a limited shelf life. They're only going to go on for so long, and then it'll be over. And the question is, when is this going to happen? And the answer is found in verse nine. Paul says, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." That shows you the limited nature of the gifts. Paul says we know in part, and we prophesy in part. In other words, our prophecies are very limited. Now they only come in parts or bits and pieces, because one guy stands up and prophesizes a little bit. Another one stands up next week and prophesizes some more but a time is coming when we'll get more than that. Because when the perfect or the full prophecy comes, the partial will be done away with and the Greek word for perfect here in this verse is *teleios*, which is an interesting term because it's the same word Jesus used on the cross when He said, "It is finished." That doesn't mean that it's morally finished, it means it's functionally finished. Because Jesus had done

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everything that He was supposed to do on the cross to save us. Once He died, it did not need to be added to any more. And it's the same way with this word here. Because in the context, the word perfect refers to the Bible. I mean, remember, Paul uses the word prophecy here, in order to say that there will be a time when God's prophecy will be finished for us, the ongoing revelation will be over, because it'll be so perfect that nothing else needs to be added to it. And that will occur when the Bible is complete.

In Paul's day, the New Testament was still being written; it was still being put together by men like Peter and Paul and James and John; they would write their letters and compile them. But what he's saying here is that process will not go on forever. Eventually, it's going to stop and when it does, all the extra prophecies will come to an end, because we won't need them anymore. If you want to write this verse down, Revelation 22 verse 19, says a similar thing, when it tells us at the very end of the Bible, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in the book." John said that because there were a lot of false prophets at his time, just like it is today, there were a lot of people abusing this gift. So John makes it clear that once I'm dead, it's over. And once the book is finished, all the prophecy will come to an end. Because you're not going to keep adding to this forever. God doesn't want it to be that way. Once I write it down, that's it, which Paul goes on to explain further, if you look in verse 11. He says this, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reasoned like a child. But when I became a man, I did away with childish things." Those three phrases there correspond with the three gifts you just studied. "Speak like a child" refers to tongues. "Think like a child" refers to prophecy, and "reason like a child" refers to knowledge. Paul says, I used to do all that. But when I became a man, I did away with childish things. When I finally received the Bible, I cut it out because I didn't need it anymore. I mean, why would I want to go back to listening to prophet after prophet after prophet when I have the whole thing right here? It's just not needed. He also uses another illustration of this, when he says in verse 12, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I've been fully known." That's a powerful image of this as well, because mirrors in the ancient world were not as well-crafted as they are today. So it was very typical to look into a mirror at the time, and get a distorted image of yourself because the glass was not very smooth. And Paul uses that image here to say that this is what the church had, before the Bible was finished, it had a distorted image of God. It had a rough sketch, not that it was distorted like it was wrong, it was just piecemeal. Little here, little there. But Paul says, "Now I will know fully just as I'm fully known." In other words, when the Bible gets here, I can look straight into the pages of it, and see my reflection perfectly. Because it's way better than anything I ever had before.

Let me tell you how this applies to our lives today: the modern day use of a lot of these gifts is wrong. I'm sorry to be so blunt about that. But I think there's a time to be blunt about this issue. But the modern day practice of things like prophecies and tongues is mistaken. Because it doesn't take this into account. One day, these things will cease. So in order to keep up the idea that a lot of this is happening today, what a lot of churches have done is they've decided to fake it and turn the gifts into something they were never meant to be. Because when they say they speak in tongues, they don't speak in tongues. It's not a

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language. You all speak different languages in here, but you're not speaking in tongues. They claimed to speak in tongues over there and they're not doing it. There they are uttering nonsense or they say they're giving prophecy and they're not doing that either because they're just making something up. They say they received knowledge but it isn't knowledge, so you can't get swept up in that. You have to find a better way to process these things, because you need to go to the Bible instead.

I don't know if you've ever visited some of these churches before, but it's the saddest thing in the world to watch people pray to God and cry to God and call out to God to speak to them all the while their Bible is shut. And it's the most tragic thing for them to look to prophet after prophet after prophet and apostle after apostle after apostle in order to see what God would say to them, while at the same time this is lying closed on the pew right beside them. Because as Paul says here, you shouldn't listen to a partial word when you have a perfect word. And you shouldn't pay attention to a distorted image of God, when you have a clear one staring back at you like a mirror.

To add to this, I could stand up here and mentioned cult after cult after cult that started this way. They all began when someone said God spoke to them. You know, Joseph Smith, when the Mormons he goes off into a cave gets golden tablets, nobody else sees the Golden tablets, puts on magic spectacles and Mormonism is born. Charles Taze Russell, same idea. And we could talk about Christian group after Christian group after Christian group that crashed and burned over this, like the holiness movement and the revivalist movement in the Bethel movement in the word of faith movement and the International House of Prayer. I mean, they're not all cultic, but they have the same approach to revelation that the cults do and as a result, it led them down a terrible path.

Because listen, friends, the Bible says God still speaks to our hearts. He just doesn't do it by neglecting the Scriptures. John 16, verse 13, says, "But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. Because that's one of the things that the Spirit does. He doesn't leave you alone in your journey. He doesn't expect you to find the truth by yourself. He guides you into it. And one of the things that he uses to do that is the Bible. Romans eight verse 26, also says, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." And that's another thing that He does because He speaks to us in our weakness, He intercedes for us when we're too weak to pray, which is a mystery. We don't know exactly how He does that. But Scripture plays a part. John 16, verse eight also says, "When the Spirit comes, He will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment." He also convicts us as well. But He doesn't give tongues and prophecy and knowledge anymore. He did it once. He's not doing it again. He could do it again, if He chose to. The issue is just that he doesn't choose to do it.

Which brings us to another area that shows us that the sign gifts have ceased. And that is the area of church history. Just to review this other one, the first one is the Bible, because the Bible says when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with. That's not meant to take away from the gift of prophecy because it was a wonderful gift. And it's not to downplay the gift of tongues, because it's an

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amazing gift; it just had a limited duration. It had a role to play in the providence of God, but now the role is over. Which brings us to the next area that shows you that these gifts have ceased, and that is church history. Which means that you don't just find it in Scripture, you find it in the pages of time. After the Bible was finished, history tells us that these three gifts actually did cease.

To help you with this section and might do well for you to take out the handouts in your bulletins while I say a few words about that. We put a handout in your bulletins on this topic because like I told you last time, miracles didn't just happen all the time in history. So if you're wondering why there's a big gap of time after these miracles ceased, it also happened that way during the Bible times. Because if you go back to Bible times, you find that there are a lot of people who never performed an outward miracle like Noah. As far as we know, he never did one; he lived a perfectly normal life. Even when he built the ark. He just did it with hammer and nails. Job didn't perform any miracles either. You can imagine Job would have wanted God to heal him and make the suffering stop. But the Lord didn't do that. Or Jeremiah, the weeping prophet; Jeremiah did prophesy, but he didn't speak in tongues. And he didn't raise the dead. Because for the most part in Bible times, miracles were very rare. If they happened all the time, then when they occurred, people would just say, "Oh, well, there's another one. What's the big deal? We just saw one yesterday." So they didn't happen all the time. Because when you do a survey of it, you find there were six phases when the Lord chose to do miracles in the Bible. And all this information is on the page that you have. But there was the beginning of Israel as a nation. And there was the conquest of the promised land. And the Lord did miracles when He was saving Israel from destruction in the days of the Judges, and when he was calling them to repent, under the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. He did miracles during the time of Jesus. In fact, during the time of Jesus, there were probably more miracles than any other time because the Son of God was walking the earth. You saw more demons, and exorcisms and spiritual activity during those three and a half years than you ever saw. And then there was the creation of the church when the apostles did them in the first century. And that was it. Other than that, miracles were very sparse, because there were large periods of time when they completely disappeared from view hundreds of years, 1000s of years. Because the idea is that the Lord used them for a little while to get people's attention, and then they stopped. And then He would use them again down the road to get people's attention again, and then He would stop again.

We could talk about all these ages this morning, but there really isn't enough time. So we'll just talk about the one that comes at the end here, the creation of the church, because this is what we're living in today. We're in the church age. And it might help to tie this into the gift of tongues, because it's the most controversial one in the list. Because if you look at it on a timeline, the last time anybody spoke in tongues in the church was in Acts 19, when Paul laid hands on the Ephesians, and they practice the gift. The interesting thing about that is that the tongues are not mentioned from Acts 20 onwards. In other words, you don't see him mentioned in the latter half of the book, which doesn't mean the gift had ceased. But it does mean the church didn't emphasize it very much; it wasn't that big of a deal. I also want to mention that gift is not talked about in any one of the New Testament letters, other than the book of First Corinthians. And then it's a rebuke, it's not really a positive thing. And it's not mentioned in the

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book of Revelation. Which is a major problem for those who say that the gift of tongues will be here, all the way up until the end, because when you read that book, you find out that it's that isn't the case. There's miracle lots of miracles in the book of Revelation, tongues are not found in its pages. Because the idea is that no one expected to see it at that point, because it would cease before that, which is what you see when you look at the history books, because they tell us that the gift of tongues vanished right after the last apostle died. It dropped off the face of the earth when the first century came to a close until a man named Montanus showed up in AD 160 claiming to use it.

He appeared in Asia Minor with two prophetesses named Priscilla and Maxim Milla who said that they spoke in tongues along with him. And that sounds impressive until you also realize that they also believed that they had the ability to forgive people's sins. And they could also look at someone and tell they were saved, not by their fruit, but by their appearance. They had some kind of spiritual X ray machine in their mind. Some of you wish you could have that right. They also taught you could lose your salvation and the Trinity did not exist. And they said Jesus was going to return within their lifetime, instead of his kingdom and Mapusa a small village in the modern day land of Turkey. So if you thought it was going to be in Jerusalem, I'm sorry, but you're wrong. He was in Turkey of all places. And in order to do that, one eyewitness said that Montanus and his two prophetesses would speak in utterances that were nothing more than strange, fanatical and quiet, unintelligible words, of which no rational person could find a meaning. So in other words, they spoke in something, but it wasn't tongues. And they use some type of gift or some type of utterance, but it wasn't the thing you find in Acts chapter two because they treated it like a pagan thing. Remember, I told you pagans would act that way, they would worship Zeus and Aphrodite by acting like that? Montanus did it with a Christian spin. And the interesting thing about him is that for the next 1500 years in history, there's a complete silence on the gift. Because nobody mentions it from ad 200 to AD 1700; you don't hear it brought up anywhere.

The Roman Catholics don't practice it and the Greek Orthodox don't practice it. The Protestant reformers don't do it, and neither do any of the splinter groups that came from them, which is bizarre, because there's lots of references to miracles back then. In the Middle Ages, you see a lot of people praying to relics, and going to shrines and visiting the bones of the Apostles in order to pray the rosary over them 500 times and get healed, but there's no reference to this. It's completely gone. Which caused the church leader Augustine to say that in the earliest times, the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed, and they spoke with tongues, which they had not learned as a Spirit gave them utterance. But the thing was done as a sign, and then it passed away. Now, Augustine said that in the fourth century, even in his day, he acknowledged that tongues were gone. And that would be nice if the history stopped there, but it doesn't. Because in the 18th century, a group called the shakers showed up and they said they brought it back again. They wanted to carry on the legacy that Montanus started. They got that name because in order to hold their church services, they would sit around the room and shake, kind of like a salt and pepper shaker. They would come into the room and sing and pray and meditate until someone in the congregation started to quiver. And at that point, they would all stop and listen to them, because it showed that they got a word from God. This idea of singing the same song over and over again until

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you're basically hypnotized, and you get slain in the spirit is nothing new. The shakers did it a long time ago. And as they did that, their founder, Ann Lee, said that she spoke in tongues. Now before you put too much of an emphasis on that, according to her contemporaries, Ann Lee also taught that she was the second incarnation of Christ, and told her followers to refer to her as their mother in the Lord because she was responsible for birthing them. She's the one who gave them life. She also taught that it was her job to set up the millennial kingdom, this time in New York. So now it has migrated from Turkey to America, the Big Apple. But the reason I mentioned her is because those are the only two groups that claimed to practice the gift of tongues for 2000 years. For two millennia, they're the only sects that you can find that have any association with it at all. The way some people talk today, you would think that this gift has been practiced for centuries. And it has a long legacy that stretches all the way back to the time of the apostles, but it doesn't. Even when the Protestant reformers showed up, they showed up at a time when the entire world was plunged into darkness. It was nothing but a third world to everybody. And they didn't even practice these gifts. They translated the Bible. They gave the Word of God to the people and that's what changed it turned it around.

But of all this history, this is where it gets most interesting, because this is where the gifts allegedly returned for good and they never go away. But in the early 1900s, a man named Charles Parrham, a 27 year old preacher from Topeka, Kansas, laid hands on Agnes Ozman, a young Bible student of his and she began to speak in Chinese. Or so she thought, no one in the classes spoke Chinese so there was no way to confirm that this was really Chinese or not, but for three days, Agnes claimed to speak nothing but Chinese and Parham encouraged it because he went on to lay hands on the rest of the class until 21 languages were spoken, including French, German, Bulgarian, Japanese and Spanish. One student named Alfred Garr received this gift and moved to India in order to become an evangelist. But he returned shortly afterwards with no conversations and no conversions. Because he couldn't talk to anybody. He was just a big wash. Which should have stopped Parham, but it didn't, because he went on to move to Houston, Texas, where he opened a school to teach his ideas consistently and while he was there, he began instructing a passionate man named William Seymour which turned out to be an awkward thing. Because William Seymour was black or African American. And Charles Parr ham openly taught that Anglo Saxons were God's chosen race. So he made him sit outside. Parham actually died a member of the KKK, and he was also later arrested for sexual misconduct so he was not a man of God. He wasn't the kind of person you would want to follow.

However, as Parham taught the class and William Seymour listened from the hallway, he took Parham's teachings and moved them out to Los Angeles, where he pastored the Azusa Street Mission. And while he was there, Christians and occultists alike began attending the meetings. And according to one author, it wasn't long before spiritualists and mediums from the occult societies in Los Angeles, began to have seances there and put people in trances with their magic spells. And they encourage people to indulge in behavior like jerking and shakings and chasing the devil up a tree. In time, things got so out of hand that Seymour wrote to Parham and asked him to come and help him because the whole movement was

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falling apart. And from there, amazingly enough, William Seymour's ideas stuck in North America, and he began to create something unknowingly. That's now referred to as the Pentecostal movement.

Pentecostalism basically refers to anyone who believes that all the gifts of the Spirit from the day of Pentecost are still practiced today. You can see the term Pentecost in the word Pentecostalism because they believe all the miracles are in effect, with no exceptions. They don't they don't pick and choose like we do. To be clear, we believe the Holy Spirit gives gifts to us. And we believe He does miracles today in a special way. But not all of these. They believe they are all still in effect. There are other terms like charismatic or non-Cessationist that apply to this. But whatever you want to call it, the movement took off over the next 50 years. And I can't go into all the details of this. This is all just for bird's eye view.

But once William Seymour died, another key moment happened when father Dennis Bennett, an Episcopal priest announced to his congregation in 1960, that he was baptized in the Spirit and he spoke in tongues. And the significance of that is that now it crossed over denominational lines. Now someone who was non charismatic, claimed to have a gift. Pretty soon it would spread to the Baptists and Methodists and Lutherans. Then it would leap over to the Mormons and Jehovah's Witness and Roman Catholics. A lot of that was helped by the creation of a television station called Trinity Broadcasting Network, or TBN, which was founded by Paul Crouch, Jim Baker, Jan Crouch, and Tammy Faye Baker in order to show the world what the gifts were like. And what that did is and now for the first time, people wouldn't have to go anywhere to experience the gifts, they could do it at home. They wouldn't have to travel to church or travel to a crusade and watch it, they could do it from the comfort of their own living room. I visited Trinity Broadcasting Network in Anaheim, California. And I would say it's pretty gaudy with statues and gold figurines everywhere. And I've also had the opportunity to be taught by a professor at University who served as a public relations manager for one of those founders, Jim Baker. And my professor was called upon to testify in a trial where Baker was accused of embezzling money and visiting a prostitute. And my professor said he was guilty. And so he was not a man of God, either.

But the reason I bring all this up is to ask you guys the question, you know, is this what a movement of God looks like? I mean, does this look like something that the Lord would do? Bring the gifts back through a man who died a member of the KKK? And then continue on through another man who held seances at his church? And then continue on through another man who got arrested for visiting a prostitute? No way. Let me ask you another question. When you hear about all this, and you read your Bibles and go through passages like Acts two and First Corinthians 12, and Hebrews, chapter two, do those things compare? Did they look alike at all? It's just the opposite. This looks like something the pagans did.

So the question is, why would we ever want to promote that here? We shouldn't do that. And why should you ever get caught up in that as a Christian, you shouldn't do that. Because you need to see this for what it is. It's a dangerous distortion of the Word of God. I know there are some well-intentioned

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people in this movement today. And I understand there are some who even have good theology in other areas, so I don't want to paint them all as heretics because they're not. Some of these people are genuinely born again. But the history is all the same. It all started from the same place. And that was a bad one. So we need to keep this in mind because like I said earlier, you need to have discernment in these things. As First John told us, we need to test the spirits, because God said the gifts would cease and they did cease. He told us that the sign gifts would stop, they did stop, only to come back like this, and it should send up red flags for us. In fact, John MacArthur has even come up with a term for this, when he calls it strange fire. Because he said that it's just like all the idolatrous stuff that Nadab and Abihu who tried to offer a fire to the Lord in the book of Numbers, and He killed them for it. The Lord told them, You need to worship Me with proper sacrifices and pure offerings, or else I'm going to judge you. And I think it's the same way here. We need to make sure we don't bring any strange fire into the church.

And I do want to say, brothers and sisters, no matter where you're at this morning, if your worship of the Lord has not been pure and proper, and it's been something it shouldn't be, for whatever reason, if it's because of the sin in your heart or because of the idols in your soul, we serve a merciful Savior. And we serve a God who loves to save sinners, which means He'll save you if He's never done that before. He'll forgive you if you call out His name. All you have to do is believe the price has been paid, the sacrifice has been offered, the lamb has been slain on your behalf at Calvary, to the point that He did say it is finished. He pronounced the words testify on the cross, which meant that he did everything needed to take care of you. You just need to accept it. So will you do that today? We are about to see some people get baptized and hear how they've done that. I want to encourage you that you can do the same.

Let me close us in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, Lord, we've talked about so many things this morning, related to the gifts of a Christian. But maybe we need to stop for just a moment and remind everybody of the most important thing is that we need to understand what a Christian is. A Christian is someone who has trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and run to Christ, and love Christ and submit to Christ. If we do that, Lord, we're right with you, no matter where we're at in other areas, Lord. And I pray for those who were here this morning, that they would have a heart that is right with you; that they would not get distracted by other things and strange fire and sideline issues, but they would come running to the cross. I want to thank you, even now, as we're about to celebrate baptisms, thank you for the work you've done in the lives of these young people. You're working in so many ways in our church and in this community that we don't even know about that. It's a wonderful thing to step back and see how You work in a visible way and we praise You for that. Thank You that You are a God who does miracles. Thank you that you're a God who has the power to take a dead soul and give it life. And Lord, if You've never done that, for some of these people here today, I pray that you would reach into their heart and save them. We pray this all in the name of Jesus Christ and for His glory. Amen.