

The Gifts of the Spirit, part 6

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For to one is given ... the working of miracles ... to another discerning of spirits. 1 Corinthians 12:8a, 10a

In our final look at the gifts of the Spirit, we will consider miracles and the discerning of spirits.

Miracles

A miracle is when God operates according to laws that are higher than the laws of nature. We have many examples of miracles in the Bible. In the Book of Exodus, God parted the Red Sea for the children of Israel; He provided manna from heaven for them in the wilderness. As the Israelites continued to wander in the desert, the Lord led Moses to strike the rock, and water gushed out for the thirsty people to drink. In the Book of 2 Kings, Elisha brought the son of the Shunammite woman back to life; he also caused an axe head to float in the water. These are only a few of the Old Testament examples; the list could go on.

As we look at the New Testament, we see that Jesus turned water into wine, He multiplied the fish and loaves of bread to feed over 5,000 people, and He also raised Lazarus from the dead. Our God is truly the God of the miraculous.

Do miracles still happen today? The Christian should say, "Yes, indeed, miracles are still taking place." But, what if you have never seen a miracle? Does that prove that miracles do not occur in our modern world? No, it does not! Just because you have not seen one does not prove that they are not still happening today. My confidence in the miraculous is based on the inspired Word of God, not on limited human experience.

The Discerning of Spirits

The ability to recognize false teaching and false teachers is an ability given by God referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:10 as the ***discerning of spirits***. Since false teaching is one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the church, God has given some

believers the ability to discern error so that others might be warned and protected from being led astray. We desperately need the gift of discerning of spirits in these days of spiritual confusion. The apostle Paul had a strong gift of discernment in contrast to those who seemingly had no discernment at all, evidenced by the fact that some of the men in the Corinthian church who were welcomed as apostles were actually ministers of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

want Satan promoting him. With so many false prophets in the world today, how can we know the true from the false? By asking the Lord for the gift of the discerning of spirits and by staying in the Word of God.

A More Excellent Way

As we come to the end of our study of the gifts of the Spirit, a word about the supremacy of love is in order. As important as the gifts are, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that

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In the Book of Acts, we have a couple examples of the discerning of spirits. The first is Peter's discernment of the true spiritual condition of Simon in Acts 8:9-25. Although Simon had seemingly believed and was baptized, Peter recognized that he was ***"poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity"*** (verse 23b). Simon was seeking to use God to further his own agenda, as all false prophets do.

Acts 16 records another example: Paul and the other disciples were in the city of Philippi, and a slave girl was following them, shouting, ***"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation"*** (verse 17b). The Bible says that she did this for many days, greatly annoying Paul, so he turned to her and said, ***"I command [the demon] in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."*** ***And he came out that very hour*** (verse 18b). Paul was exercising the gift of discernment; though this girl was proclaiming truth, it came from the wrong source. Paul did not

if they are not exercised in love, they are meaningless. There is always the danger of putting the emphasis in the wrong place, and there are certainly times when this has happened with the gifts. We can get so interested in the gifts we want to exercise that we lose sight of the Giver. Consequently, we are liable to become as ***sounding brass or a clanging cymbal*** (1 Corinthians 13:1b). We must keep Jesus at the forefront, or our pride will take over and people will get hurt.

Jesus said, ***"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"*** (John 13:35). Our relationship with Jesus is made evident by our love—not our wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophesying, miracles, or speaking in tongues. ***Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*** (1 John 4:7-8). 🙏