

We believe that miraculous spiritual manifestation gifts were done away when the Bible was completed. Faith, hope, and love are the the abiding spiritual gifts. *1 Corinthians 12-14*

“What! You don’t believe in miracles? Don’t you believe in the God of miracles?” Such is often the reaction when the above doctrinal statement is read! The discussion of spiritual gifts generates various and even polarizing emotional reactions and opinion.

Scripture must determine our beliefs, not our opinions or even our “experiences.”

A serious observation of Scripture verifies this FACT. The measure and mark of maturity of any church are FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE. Without these three abiding gifts, a church has no influence, witness, or impact on society. Without these three, the gospel is not affirmed and validated to an unbelieving world that not only needs to hear it but desperately needs to see it displayed. How?

Through living churches in the dynamic demonstration of faith, hope, and love.

Paul commended churches for their display of faith, hope, and love, or he rebuked them and corrected them for the lack thereof.

FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE... the three abiding gifts; the three authenticating gifts of our witness. Without these three, we have no witness! We have no testimony! Our influence is null. It’s dead! Living faith, unconditional love, joyous hope, real Christianity! Dynamic witness! The MORE excellent way!

How important is the preservation and display of FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE?

The Lord Himself established the practice of church discipline to preserve all three:

1. Public Offense (*1 Corinthians 5*):
to preserve FAITH in the church...which can only be undermined by disobedient unholy living.
2. Heretical Offense (*Titus 3:10*):
to preserve HOPE in the church...which can which can only be shattered by false doctrine.
3. Personal Offense (*Matthew 18:15-18*):
to preserve LOVE in the church...which can only be destroyed by divisions in the church.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

The term “miracle” is probably one of the most broadly misused words. We say the birth of a baby is a miracle, or classify any healing or recovery from sickness as a miracle. But just what is a miracle?

The literal meaning of the word “miracle” in the Greek language is simply “_____.” Every miracle that Jesus did was a sign to make known that truly He was _____ of God. The miracles authenticated His mission and His claim to be the Son of God and Promised Messiah.

A miracle was a _____ of God, whereby he displayed His power and confirmed His Word by doing that which was outside the NATURAL ORDER that God has established.

On the other hand a VIRGIN BIRTH, as Christ had, is an absolute _____, outside the boundary of God’s established natural law.

Healing miracles in the Bible were not a process, but _____.

WHAT WAS GOD’S PURPOSE IN DISPLAYING THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS?

Let it be noted that every time a miracle was performed in the New Testament by Jesus or an Apostle it was always used in the context of _____ the message that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God, the Christ, the Lord and Jewish Messiah.

Miracles were _____ used to confirm God’s message and His messenger..._____!

“And these signs shall follow them that believe, In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17,18).

“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and the word with signs following. Amen.” (Mark 16:20).

“And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43).

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“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way unto thy house” (Mark 2:10,11).

Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthian church listed the miraculous sign gifts to include *“miracles, the gifts of healings,... diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).*

Each were _____ gifts to _____ the message of Christ to a particular people.

TO WHOM WERE THESE GIFTS GIVEN AND TO WHOM WERE THEY OPENLY DISPLAYED?

To the Jews... to the house of Israel... to confirm to the nation that Jesus was indeed the Christ, their Promised _____.

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:22).

A study of the actual demonstration of sign gifts in the New Testament reveals two _____ facts:

1. Jews were _____ present.
2. An apostle was _____ present

Signs were specifically for the nation of Israel for a specific and _____ amount of time.

HOW LONG WERE THE MIRACULOUS SIGN GIFTS TO CONTINUE?

Paul himself, verified their _____ nature when he penned in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 8, *“whether there be tongues, they shall cease.”*

“According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things” (Micah 7:15).

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:30-32).

The Jews _____ the testimony and signs of Christ; they rejected the testimony and signs of the apostles; they rejected the testimony and signs of the Holy Spirit...for 40 YEARS!

And then...in AD 70, judgment came. The signs ceased. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish temple, and the nation was dispersed, no longer in the land, thus fulfilling the prophetic timeline of Micah of _____ years of wonderful signs to the Jews.

And then the Apostle Paul, with spiritual envy and anticipation spoke of a _____ way, a better way which would come.

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“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12: 31).

Paul was speaking of a time when the revelation of God would be fulfilled with the completion of the New Testament canon, the writing of the 66 books of the Bible. Paul was speaking of a time when the message of the church would _____ be confirmed by sign gifts and miracles, but by that which is so much better, so much greater, a more excellent way.

HOW DOES JESUS, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, SPECIFICALLY _____ THE MATURITY LEVEL OF A CHURCH OR CHRISTIAN TODAY?

Paul answers these questions clearly in his epistles.

The abiding spiritual gifts are _____, _____ and _____. These three, when accompanied with the preaching of the completed Word of God, provide a clear and powerful witness as to the glory and grace of Jesus Christ the Son of God as Savior and Lord.

The dynamic testimony of faith, hope, and love and Scripture is _____ than any miraculous sign or “new” revelation in openly affirming the validity of the Gospel. This is the better way. Why not seek the best? Why not pursue the excellent? Lay aside the _____ and embrace the greater!

Listen again to the words of Paul:

“Charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am also known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

To the Colossian church:

“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus, and of the LOVE which ye have to all the saints, for the HOPE which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of the truth of the gospel” (Colossians 1:3-5).

To the church at Thessalonica:

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of FAITH, and labor of LOVE, and patience of HOPE in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).

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FAITH...HOPE...LOVE...commended...the more _____ way!

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your FAITH groweth exceedingly, and the CHARITY of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

To the church at Corinth:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you” (1 Corinthians 1:10-11)

The Corinthian church totally _____ and absolutely _____... was lacking in all three areas... void of FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE.

FAITH (Greek PISTIS) Faith is _____ God’s Word and acting upon it in obedience because you know it is true... based on hearing and not by sight... or even feelings.

LOVE (Greek Agape) unconditional love, an act of the will, a _____ regardless of circumstance or feelings, regardless if love is returned or not...the love of God...the love of Christ...the gift of love which abides in us by the Holy Spirit.

People possessed by the gift of love of the Holy Spirit display a profound compassion and love for humanity...for the unlovable...for the powerless...they love as Christ loved. Worship and resentment _____ reside together!

HOPE (Greek Elpis) firmly held _____ of future good resting firmly in the promise of future resurrection and built upon the foundation of healthy doctrine.

The Corinthians were not living in anticipation of the return of Christ and His eternal Kingdom. They were totally immature and absolutely _____ in their pursuits and ambitions as they lived only for NOW.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Why is love the greatest? Because it is _____!

Faith..Hope..Love...the three abiding gifts...the more excellent way!