

We're in a series on spiritual gifts and we're going to go deep today. So, are you ready? We're going to work through the scripture verse by verse; sometimes word by word as we're laying a foundation to understanding the spiritual gifts. We're going to be doing this for probably most of the summer because the topic of spiritual gifts is not only found in chapter 12 but it's also found in chapter 13 and then all the way through to chapter 14 so we have a long way to go. What we're doing right now is we're just working our way through the gift list which starts in verse 8; goes down to the end of verse 11. Then you can skip through the body of chapter 12 down to verse 28 and pick up a few other gifts in the list. And we're just going through there; building a foundation.

But before we get into the gift list I do want to look at those passages that we've been jumping over for the last couple weeks – verses 12 through 27. Paul uses the metaphor of the body to illustrate what we're like as the church and I just want to remind you for a few moments of how important you are as an individual to the collective body. Now, many times when you're studying through the spiritual gifts and especially when you're looking through the list of spiritual gifts you're starting to wonder well, where do I fit into all of this? You might look and say I don't know if I have the gift of wisdom - that teaching gift. I don't know if I have the gift of knowledge - that scholarly gift. Or you go through and you say I don't know if I'm a leader or I don't know if I'm being called to serve in this area or that area. You start to wonder well, where do you fit in the body of Christ. Well, Paul confronts some of those questions in verses 12 and following. Just read along with me in the text here.

He says, for just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. So he starts the metaphor of the body. Verse 13. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Stop right there. Right away he tells us that we're important to the body. It doesn't matter who we are or where we came from or what our nationality; what that background might be. We are important to the body. Now outside of the body of Christ the slave or the free may not get along or the Jew or the Greek may have trouble socializing together but in the body all that is erased and you come together as one and in essence what Paul is saying is you as an individual are important. You're important because of who you are in your relationship to Christ, no longer what you bring as a part of your background or your nationality or your relationship or what you have or what you don't have. You're important because of your relationship to Christ. Your spiritual gift is important.

Now keep reading. Verse 14. He says for the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should, you know because I'm not a hand I do not belong to the body. That would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say because I'm not an eye I do not belong to the body. That would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? Stop right there. Do you hear what he's saying? Now remember, he's using this as a metaphor. And essentially what he's

saying is well, you know what? Not all gifts are equal. Not all parts of the body are equal. There are different parts for different purposes. Just like in the physical body that's how it is in the spiritual body or the body of Christ.

By the way, who is it who chose your part in this body of Christ? Well, look at verse 18. It's none other than our Father being God saying but as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. He chose you. He chose your spiritual gift.

Keep reading. Let's drop down to verse 21. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you nor again to the head I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. You can stop there. He keeps going. In essence what he's saying is look, you're important because of your relationship with Christ. Not all of you have the same gifts. We're not equal. We all have different parts. God chose your specific gift for you. Each gift though is equally important, why? Because it makes up the whole body.

Now, what happens to us as we come together, join together, using our gifts, serving each other through our gifts? Well, drop down to verse 26. He says if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored all rejoice together. What does that sound like? That sounds like unity doesn't it? That's what happens when we use our spiritual gift. We use it to serve one another. That creates unity in the body. What have we learned about the church in Corinth? That it was frayed. That there was a sense of disunity there. What is Paul trying to do? He's trying to bring them back as a corporate body of believers to serve one another.

And so why are we spending time working through building a foundation understanding the gift list? Because ultimately, if we understand how we're gifted, understand where we should serve and we're activating our service what does that do? That matures the body. That brings us to unity and that's the path that we're on. That's the foundation that we're going to continue to lay.

So let's now turn back to those familiar verses, verse 8 through 11 and continue the study of the gift list. Now, we're transitioning today. We're moving out of the teaching category into the sign gift category. Last week we wrapped up the teaching – remember there were three categories: teaching, signs, leadership? We wrapped up the teaching category. We're now going into the sign category. So what are the sign gifts? Before we get to that let's just have a working definition of what the sign gifts really are. The sign gifts have a very clear purpose throughout the scriptures. The sign gifts are essentially manifestations the Holy Spirit. That's the working of the Holy Spirit to authenticate. That's the purpose behind the sign gifts – to authenticate the message of the Gospel or the messenger. So, when we talk about the sign gifts essentially what we're saying is these gifts have been given to the church to authenticate the message of the Gospel or the one presenting the Gospel – the messenger.

Now, let's see this as we look at the scriptures together. Let's start in verse 8 of chapter 12. He says, to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit. Those are the teaching gifts. Now he transitions, verse 9. To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles. Let's stop right there. Here are the three sign gifts that we're going to look at this morning – faith, healing and miracles. Faith as a sign gift. Healing and miracles as a sign gift. We already covered tongues that has slid from the teaching category into the sign category and we'll unpack that more in the future when we get to chapter 13 and 14 we'll look at tongues specifically. But today let's just look at faith, healing and miracles.

Let's start with faith. What is faith? Now, when you hear the word faith I don't want you to think of saving faith. This is a different kind of faith. This is a faith that comes after salvation. Most, listen to me. Most theologians would agree that this type of faith is the ability to trust God with an extraordinary confidence. It's just this ability to trust God, trust His Word with an extraordinary confidence. That's what most theologians would agree upon as the definition of this kind of faith but that is about as much as the theologians agree upon. What happens is when we start to unpack the concept the faith the problem is this gift becomes very vague in scripture. Anecdotally we know about this gift, right? We know about the gift let's say in Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11 is a great place to see faith in action. In fact, if you ever want to spend a little bit of devotional time, early in the morning grab a cup of coffee, go out on the deck, open up your bible to Hebrews chapter 11 and just read through this because it's a list of people who had great faith. And it just goes on and on again. You can read about the works of Moses. You can read about Abraham. You can read about Rahab, about Samson on and on and on. This group faithful men and women as they are presented in scripture. But here's the thing – do these people have a specific spiritual gift called faith or did they grow in their faith? Did they grow in their following after Christ and learn to depend more and more on God?

The struggle that most theologians have is that they don't necessarily see faith as a stand alone gift but rather it's a product of trusting God, of growing in your faith, of growing to the point where you trust God that when He says He's going to do something you say ok. I'm going to do that. I'm going to live that out in my belief, in my practice. So, faith is not necessarily a stand alone gift. It's actually a product of spiritual maturity because you look at these people and you say you know, these people in Hebrews 11, although they do great things you find out the back story of there lives and what do you find out? That they're a lot like you and me. They're just normal people and they have their own failings and their own faults and their sins. And yet when they began to trust God they began to blossom in their faith and God used them to do great things. Now I bring this up because that leaves many theologians to consider another possibility for this word. That it may not be a stand alone gift but rather it's connected to the next two gifts of healing and miracles and you see this develop grammatically when you begin to study the text because what we find here is that Paul uses a different adjective to modify the word faith.

I put in your programs an illustration of the Greek construction and even though you may not have any understanding of Greek you could go through and you could see the similar use of the word *other*. And then you look down at the Greek word and you see that it's the word *állos* and if you were to hear it read you hear this word over and over again, *állos, állos, állos* until you come to the word *faith* you hear a different word. It would be the word *héteros*. It can be defined as *other* or *another* or it could be more specifically defined as a category to mean the other of the two as if Paul is saying *faith* is the foundation that points to those who have the gift of healing and miracles. Now, he's not saying that healing and miracles are a result of faith. No. He's saying that faith accompanies those who have the gift of healing and miracles and you can see it as an outpouring through that gift of healing or miracles; that expression of faith. I think I'm leaning that direction. I'm tending to lean toward the idea that maybe this isn't a stand alone gift but rather it's modifying what is to come. It's helping us to understand the people who have the gift of healing and miracles.

So let's look at those two gifts. Let's look at the gifts of healing and miracles. I'm going to pull a phone company trick on you. We're going to bundle these gifts together this morning. We're going to study them together because I tell you, we could spend the entire summer looking through all the scriptures that have to do with the healing and miracles of God and we would not have enough time to exhaust them so we really need to just get a big picture. We need to put these two together and get a big picture of why. What is their purpose in the scriptures. Now, we need to start again laying the same foundation of a good definition because I've found that the definitions many people use for healing or miracles might slide a bit from what we see in scriptures so let's be unified in what we're thinking when we're thinking of these words healing and miracles.

First, let's look at healing. Healing – the biblical definition that I've come to understand is the ability to cure organic diseases or I might add deformities; that ability to cure organic disease or deformity. That's different than symptomatic illnesses. An organic disease means there is an organ in your body that has stopped working. And the ability to heal that is to go in in a supernatural way and be able to heal that without any type of medicine or surgery. It's an intrusion into the earthly life in a miraculous form by God and the healing is occurring and it changes that structure of that once deformed or deficient organ. That's a healing. Symptomatic illnesses are like stomach aches, head aches, you know – joint pain; those kinds of things. No. This goes much deeper than that.

The definition of miracle equally we need to have a good definition. Just the other day my daughter came home from school. She's a thirteen year old. She's a junior high student. She came home all excited, elated. She said, dad it's a miracle. I passed my science test. No. That's not a miracle. I had a miracle today. I got an up front parking at Walmart. That is a miracle. No. That's not a miracle either. What is a biblical miracle? A miracle is the ability to perform supernatural events that have no other explanation other

than God. That is a miracle. The supernatural intrusion that has no other explanation other than God.

Now, who do we see in scripture that possesses these abilities, these gifts? Well, it's a very small elite group of people. If you go through the scriptures you'll find that the Old Testament prophets had those abilities to do healings and perform miracles. Jesus, obviously fits in this category. The Apostles. The seventy disciples that he sent out for a very specific time for a very specific purpose. Paul, also an apostle and just a few other partners of the apostles. That's it. We do not see this randomly scattered throughout the churches. Did you hear that? We do not see the gifts of healing or miracles just randomly scattered throughout the churches but rather it's confined to very small group of people. Why? Because healings and miracles serve a specific purpose and that's what we need to learn.

There are basically four great periods of healings and miracles that are identified in the scriptures. There's the Mosaic Period – the time when Moses lives; the Prophetic Period – I'm confining that to mainly Elijah and Elisha; the Mesianic Period – that time when Christ was alive and then what is the Apostolic Period – that's the time when the Apostles were alive. Now, why are healings and miracles occurring in these times? Listen. They're occurring; remember what we learned about our definition? They're occurring because they're authenticating what? They're authenticating the Message, the Gospel that is being proclaimed or the messenger who is proclaiming the Gospel. That's what we see throughout scripture that the healings and miracles that are occurring during these periods are authenticating the Message or the messenger. Now, we don't have time to go through all the examples so I'm going to confine this just to the life of Christ but you could look at the life of Moses. You could look at the life of Elijah or Elisha or you could look at the disciples lives or Peters life or Paul's life. You could find out that when they are performing these miracles or healings they're authenticating either their own message or themselves as the messenger. But let's just look at Jesus this morning.

Turn with me over to the book of John, John chapter 2. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; fourth book of the New Testament. In John 2 what do we find? We find really the first public very clear miracle of Jesus. Jesus starts His public ministry at the wedding feast in Cana. This is the first time that we see in biblical scripture that Jesus performs a miracle. There's extra biblical information that says well, you know, he raised a little boy from the dead or he created this clay dove and turned it into a real dove. No, all that's extra biblical, none of that can be authenticated. But we come to the scriptures and we find that at age thirty Jesus does his first miracle. Why does he do that miracle? The miracle is a simple miracle in comparison to all the others. It's Him turning water, simple water into wine. They were at this wedding feast. The ceremonial wine had been consumed and so He takes these jars, six jars filled with water and He turns those into wine. Why did He do this? Well, look at verse 11 and you have the answer. This is the first of His signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and here it is manifested His glory and the disciples believed in Him.

What does this word manifested mean? We learned this a few weeks ago. It means to make known. Right? So, He's making known His glory. What's that? That is He is the Son of God. He's making known publically that He is the Messiah and He's doing that through a miracle. Now, we could go from this point on and we could launch into a study of every miracle that Jesus did; every healing that He did and we would find that there was an authenticating presence that connected to either Him as the messenger or the Gospel message that He was presenting; that these signs and wonders, these healings, these miracles were not just done at random but they were done with a purpose and this purpose was to authenticate. It doesn't matter if He was healing a person, He was raising someone from the dead, He was calming a storm. It was all done to authenticate.

In fact, you come to the end of John. Turn there with me. John chapter 20; the next to the last chapter in the book of John, verse 30 and what does it say? Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Why are these signs, wonders, miracles, healing presented for us so that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Now, you're close to Acts. Turn over to Acts chapter 2. Let me show you another one. Acts 2, verse 22. Now Peter is speaking on the day of Pentecost and he's speaking in the square at the temple and he's saying men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God, how? Watch this. With mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst. How was He testified? How was He attested? How was He authenticated? Through the signs and wonders. So, what do we see in scripture? We see that these miracles; we see that these healings were done for a very specific purpose and it's the same for His disciples during the Apostolic era.

Two passages. Two. Turn back to Mark chapter 16. I'll show you a passage. This is the last passage in the book of Mark. I'll show you a passage that is clearer in why the signs and wonders were occurring. This is down in verse 19 – end of the book. Jesus had just finished giving the great commission and now there is the ascension. And so then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. Now, watch this. And they went out, who's they? That's the Apostles. They went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message. How was the message confirmed? Look at the text – by accompanying signs. You see the signs that the Apostles were able to do were confirming the message or they, themselves as the messenger.

One last passage which should seal it for us. Let's turn all the way towards the back of the New Testament to the book of Hebrews. And there's so many passages that I'm skipping over that could be used as well to help you understand you as well but I trust you're starting to see the purpose of these signs, these gifts, these miracles. Hebrews, chapter 2. Listen to this in verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord. What was declared? The Gospel.

Salvation. It was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard. Who are those who heard? That's the Apostles. While God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will. How did he attest the message of salvation that came through Jesus Christ? By signs and wonders.

You see, God designed healing and miracles for a very specific purpose. That's where I'm trying to lead you in your thinking. He designed it to confirm His revelation. Do you understand that? And once the revelation was finished there was no longer a need for those who would have a gift of healing or miracles. Think about it. When God finished the Old Testament what happened? There were four hundred years of silence. There was no more signs and wonders. When we come to the end of the New Testament, the New Testament is finished what happens? There's no more signs or wonders. They're fading away. In fact, even Paul in the latter portion of his life was no longer able to heal. He wasn't able to heal Apaproditus. He wasn't able to heal Timothy; those who were his closest associates. His own gift of healing began to wane, why? Because it was coming to the end of the Apostolic era. Only Paul and John were left and when those passed from the scene so did the gift of healing and miracles.

A previous theologian writing between 1851 and 1921, B.B. Warfield in his commentary says:

"These miracle gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it."

Now, you might be thinking sitting here right now what are you saying? Are you saying that God no longer does gifts or no longer does miracles, rather, no longer does healings? Now, listen to me. I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that God no longer performs great miracles; that He no longer performs healings. I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is that God no longer uses people with the gift of healings or the gift of miracles to perform or authenticate. Rather, now it's God, Himself doing the work. He doesn't need people with those gifts, why? Because the revelation has already been confirmed. Jude 3, once for all delivered to the saints. See, we have all that we need here in the Word. You say, well, what about those people who say they have this gift? And we hear about them and we see them on TV and they say they have these gifts. What about these faith-healers?

Well, let's talk openly about faith-healers. There's a time when the church of Jesus Christ has to stop being naïve and study the Word of God. I was reading in a book by Dr. William Noland who wrote the book *Healing, A Doctor in Search of a Miracle* and he confirms what many studies have confirmed – that there is no legitimate proof that anyone can heal organic diseases; that with a touch these diseases are not being healed. He writes that healers will readily admit that they heal not by themselves but

through the Holy Spirit. And I was thinking, isn't that convenient because what happens when the person isn't healed? Well, it's not blamed on the healer. It's blamed on the Holy Spirit, right? That's not how we see the gift operative in the New Testament. Jesus was fully aware that He could heal at will. So was Peter. So was Paul. They understood that they, themselves at-will could heal. They didn't blame it on, they understood it came through the power of God but they didn't blame it on the Holy Spirit if they weren't able to heal. They understood that their healing gift was given for a purpose and for a set period of time.

Dr. Noland writes:

"Search the literature, as I have and you will find no documented cures by healers of gallstones, heart disease, cancer or any other serious organic disease. Certainly you will find patients temporarily relieved of their upset stomachs, their chest pains, their breathing problems and you'll find healers and believers who will interpret this interruption of symptoms as evidence that the disease is cured, but when you track the patient down you find the cure to have been purely symptomatic and transient and the underlying disease remains."

If you want an even more shocking expose on faith-healers, although I don't agree with all of his premise, James Randi writes in *The Faith Healers* a shocking expose behind the scenes of what many of us probably imagine but he brings into print. He talks about the idea that faith-healers work only in controlled environments. They worked in a stage confined way. They start and they stop when they want to and there's always a plea for money. Isn't that the case?

Now, think about it logically. If you had the gift of healing, what would you do? I mean, if you had the ability to heal at the organic level what would you do? I think the first thing I would do is I would head down to Columbus to Children's Hospital. I'd walk up and down the halls and I would be healing children and releasing them so they could go home and be with their family and then what would you do? You'd probably go across town and go to the James Cancer Clinic and you would disconnect all those people who are getting chemotherapy and radiation treatments. You would send them home. And you wouldn't have to worry about money, would you? Because people would throw money at you for you to come to them and heal whatever disease that they have. You wouldn't do it in a confined area. You would share this with the world, why? Because you have the ability to change people's lives, not just put on an act or a show. You would have the ability to authenticate the true power of God.

You say, well, does God do that today? Does God heal today? Absolutely. But how? See, the how is different. Before it was to authenticate His authentication. That time has passed. How does He do it today? Well, turn with me to James. Last passage. James, chapter 5 and I'll show you how He does it. The reality is when you look at

faith-healers you have to call them what they are. When you look at biblical scripture, you look at proof, you understand it in context then what are faith-healers. I'll say what you're thinking. Faith-healers are wolves in sheep's clothing trying to fleece the flock. Listen. It is big business to say that you can heal somebody because isn't that what people want?

When my mother was dying of cancer, in the last few months of her life she was desperate and she started doing some rather unorthodox things to save her life and I see this over and over again. The reality is, is that there are times when disease and illnesses fit the purposes of God even though we may not understand it. Remember when the disciples in John chapter 9 were walking past the blind man and they turned to Jesus and they say who sinned? Was it this blind man or what is his parents? And Jesus said you don't understand – neither of them sinned. This man was born was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed through him. Do you understand that some of you may have an organic disease that may shorten your life because it fits the purpose of God. God wants to be glorified through that disease but He may also, at the same account take that disease that will shorten your life and He may heal you from that disease. Why? For the same reason – so that He alone, no person, so that He alone might receive the glory. Well, how does that happen? Well, we're taught in scripture that what does the church do? We don't wait on healers or those who say they can perform miracles. We go to the source. We go to God Himself. Verse 13, is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. If anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. That's the process of biblical healing in the church today.

Do I believe in miracles? Absolutely. Do I pray miracles? Do I pray for healing? Yes. That's what we're praying for right now in our home. We're praying that Michelle's sight might be returned to her for the glory of God. But if it's God's will not to return her sight then what are we saying? We're saying God, then may your works be accomplished through this disease to fit your purpose either way. Whether in the healing or in the disease may You be glorified and isn't that how we're taught all throughout scripture to live our lives? Dependent, moment by moment on who? Not a chance possibility of a miracle but on the faithful, sovereign working of a holy God who's good and even though we don't understand all that He brings into our lives we trust that He does and they fit His divine purpose. We wait upon a good God and then which ever He gives us, either healing or not we say, Lord, what? May your will be done. Amen? Let's pray together.