

# Controversies of the Work of the Spirit

## Prophecy | Tongues/Interpretation | Miracles/Gifts of Healings

The goal of this article is to show what Scripture says about three sets of controversial gifts and how they should be used. These gifts are listed in **1 Corinthians 12:28-30** and throughout God's word. They are:

1. Gift of Prophecy
2. Gift of Tongues & Interpretation
3. Miracles & Gifts of Healing

The majority of what the Bible says about spiritual gifts are not disputed. However, some gifts in Paul's list in **1 Corinthians 12** cause disagreements. There are two main points of contention with these gifts:

1. What do these controversial gifts look like? How are they expressed?
2. Are these controversial gifts still at work in the world today?

These are legitimate questions that need to be answered, and we will seek to answer the former in this article. God's Word does not necessarily explain all spiritual gifts in vivid detail requiring extra study to define and understand. Where the command to love is described in action and word throughout all the Bible, the description of tongues, for example, has little doctrinal teaching (mainly found in one place, **1 Corinthians 12-14**).

So, we desire to define these gifts from the Scriptures.

We should never simply define terms in an academic sense, but rather do our best to understand spiritual gifts in an accurate light in order to obey God's Word. Words matter and definitions matter.

Albeit some definitions matter more than others, correct? For example, the word Gospel could have many different connotations to it. Biblical Gospel (meaning justification by God's grace only through faith in Jesus Christ) could be skewed and defined as God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ with justification added through the keeping of Old Testament laws. Definitions do matter. We all know that the skewed definition of Gospel I just mentioned was heatedly disputed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Paul fought against that Gospel definition because behind it was a reality that nullified (Galatians 2) the grace of God. It made the Gospel no Gospel at all. In doing so, the Galatians jeopardized their souls with that false gospel.

Definitions matter because they reflect belief in a reality. We seek to uncover the reality of spiritual gifts and define them accordingly.

Now, keep in mind the definition of Gospel is top-priority issue. We stake our lives on the reality/truth of the Gospel. You misunderstand the Gospel and you are not a Christian.

That said, the definitions we'll uncover for these controversial gifts are not top-priority issues. We could be wrong in our definitions. There are many wise and respected followers of Jesus who don't agree with these definitions of controversial gifts. We may or may not be able to congregate as a church because of these disagreements, but that does not mean we do not have the most important fellowship of all--a unity found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, we seek to define these gifts one by one this morning. We desire to understand gifts as we desire for all of God's Word to be understood. Most importantly, I hope we leave this morning knowing that understanding God's Word is top-priority in our goal to know God and obey what He says about our corporate worship and spiritual gifts.

Let's stick to God's word where truth is found to discern and define these gifts. I hope to provide resources for us to deepen our study and understanding and passion for God and His Word.

For each gift, I have a rather clunky definition. We will break them down one by one to understand what we believe the Scriptures say about these gifts.

## Prophecy

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What is prophecy? From the Scriptures, we will define it as:

**Definition:** Biblical prophecy consists of infallible revelations from God, gifted by the Spirit (**1 Corinthians 14:1**) to some (**1 Corinthians 12:29**) believers, related spontaneously (**1 Corinthians 14:29**), weighed/tested for validity (**Deuteronomy 18:20-22, 1 Corinthians 14:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22**) and spoken by believers for both specific personal communication to an individual/s (**Acts 21:10-11**) and the general foundational (**Ephesians 2:20, 3:5, 4:11**) building of the Church.

## **1. “for both specific personal communication to an individual/s and the general foundational building of the Church.”**

First, prophecies are revealed to God’s people at times for specific personal revelation and other times for foundational instruction and building of the Church.

### **“Specific personal communication”**

Sometimes we see God reveal a prophecy for the sake of one person. For example, in **Acts 21** we see the Prophet Agabus prophesy to Paul foretelling of his impending arrest. We will address this prophecy again later, but for now we can discern it’s a prophecy while at the same time it’s made to an individual for their knowledge. Another example is of Paul’s mention to Timothy of a personal prophecy made to Timothy in **1 Timothy 1:18**.

### **“Foundational building of the church”**

We also see prophecies meet a much more far reaching purpose to command the people of God or build up the Church.

#### **Ephesians 2:20-21**

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

#### **Hebrews 1:1**

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

#### **2 Peter 1:19-21**

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Prophets are foundational to the household of God because they have relayed the words of God to the people of God. An example of foundational prophecy would be the John's book of Revelation.

So, where the prophecy from Agabus (**Acts 21**) shows us the power of God by revealing truth to Paul without giving us any personal instruction, there are many foundational prophecies that teach us the attributes of God and tell us of His character.

## **2. "Gifted by the Spirit to some Believers & related spontaneously"**

Second, prophecies are gifted by the Spirit to some believers and related to them spontaneously.

### **"Gifted by the Spirit"**

We are told by Paul that prophecy is a gift given by the Spirit.

#### **1 Corinthians 14:1**

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

We don't have any evidence in the Bible of someone not indwelt by the Spirit proclaiming true revelations from God. Prophecy given by the Spirit is also a higher gift as mentioned by Paul. Though all gifts have their own place, prophecy is especially edifying in that it is a revelation of God's words to his people.

### **"To some believers"**

We also know not all Christians prophesy, but it is a gift given to some believers. In **1 Corinthians 12**, Paul lays out that there are many different parts to the body of Christ and many different roles.

#### **1 Corinthians 12:29**

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

This is a rhetorical question. If all were prophets, it would contradict the very point Paul is trying to make in **1 Corinthians 12** which shows that God gave gifts to be diversely distributed among the church.

### **"Related spontaneously"**

Next, the gift of prophecy is related spontaneously to the prophet.

### **1 Corinthians 14:29-32**

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

Based on these words from Paul, we can first understand that a prophecy is a spontaneous revelation. One prophet could be sitting down in church and in a moment another person sitting there could spontaneously receive a revelation.

A second implication from this text is also that those who prophesy have full control of their faculties. The prophet speaking can stop and listen, for example. Additionally, it is relayed by Paul throughout all of **1 Corinthians 14** that all prophecy is cognitive and fully understood through the human mind.

### **3. “Infallible Revelations from God...Weighed/Tested for validity”**

Third, and most importantly, prophecies are infallible revelations from God that are weighed/tested for validity.

#### **Old Testament Prophecy**

To understand the implications of the infallibility of prophetic revelations we must begin in the Old Testament. There are three points to make regarding Old Testament prophecy.

#### **1. True Old Testament prophecies were known to be the direct words of God**

We believe, from our understanding of God’s Word (along with conservative Christianity) that Old Testament prophets spoke infallible words of God. This does not mean Old Testament prophets were sinless. However, it does mean that we have no record of a true prophet in the Old Testament proclaiming a prophecy that was mixed with error or false. When true prophets proclaimed the commands of the Lord they were always true.

#### **Jeremiah 1:9**

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

#### **1 Samuel 8:7**

And the Lord said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

**Ezekiel 2:7**

And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.

As a contrasting example, Ezekiel writes of God’s words about the false prophets of Israel.

**Ezekiel 22:28**

And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord has not spoken.

God himself, through Ezekiel, proclaims that true prophecies occur when God speaks or reveals his word to his people. The New Testament also confirms that the word of God was spoken by the prophets (**2 Peter 1:21, Hebrews 1:1**).

Now I say true prophet because the very understanding of the validity of the prophecy was understood based upon whether or not the prophecy came to pass.

**2. There is no record of any true Old Testament prophet ever making an error in their prophecy**

God ordained his words to be given to prophets who spoke the words of God to his people. Those words were always true. We could not believe in the inerrancy of scripture if true prophets could in err in the Old Testament. We would look at the Bible with skepticism and doubt if God allowed his words from prophets to be full of errors or partially true.

Even Balaam, the prophet, who was called to curse God’s people was powerless when God revealed His word to Balaam.

**Numbers 22:38**

Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak.”

Similarly, Jeremiah was unable to speak anything but what God had spoken to him:

### **Jeremiah 20:9**

If I say, "I will not mention him,  
or speak any more in his name,"  
there is in my heart as it were a burning fire  
shut up in my bones,  
and I am weary with holding it in,  
and I cannot.

### **3. Old Testament prophets were judged on the validity of their prophecies**

When we look to examples of discerning true prophecy in the Old Testament we must understand God had a clear litmus test for determining the validity of a prophet/prophecy.

### **Deuteronomy 18:18-22**

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. 20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'— 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

You see from this passage that a prophet was shown to be genuine by one thing—whether or not their claimed prophecy came to pass. If the prophecy came to pass, the prophet was from God. If it did not, the prophet was a false prophet and should be rejected.

### **New Testament Prophecy**

Based on the understanding of Old Testament prophecy as infallible, we move to the New Testament and expect to see the same understanding of prophecy, unless there is new teaching that changes the definition of prophecy. There are a handful of texts that some use to call into question the infallibility of prophecy in the New Testament. However, there are no decisive teachings to show us a change to make prophecy any

less important than it was to the people of God in the Old Testament. In other words, there is no verifiable text that implies a change in the infallibility of prophecy.

There are two texts that on the surface could be skewed to imply fallible prophecy.

**1 Corinthians 14:29**

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.

**1 Thessalonians 5:20-22**

Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Both these writings command us to listen to prophecies and test them. When reading **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22** some believe that Paul implies when we listen to prophecies, we should test them and filter out the good and throw away the evil. To do that we must assume that the holding onto the good is a portion of one prophecy and the evil we abstain from is the fallible portion of the same one prophecy.

In the same way the **1 Corinthians 14** passage seems to imply that we should prophesy and weigh what is said to distinguish both good and evil in the prophecy. This view could only hold water if we start with the assumption that prophecies can be mixed with truth and error. Remember, that we have no proof Biblically that the prophecy of the Old Testament has changed from what it was originally understood to be--the infallible Word of God.

So, let's look at those two verses in the light of infallible true prophecy.

It would make complete sense for Paul to tell the Thessalonians to test prophecies for validity. We saw the same testing done in the Old Testament in **Deuteronomy 18**, correct? Paul wants prophecies tested for validity which is completely in line with the Old Testament. In terms of holding onto good and abstaining from evil, we only can assume the fallibility of a prophecy if we view Paul's intent as for us to sift one prophecy and divide the truth from error. However, Paul does not do that and we have to make a large assumption that Paul is speaking one singular prophecy in 1 Thessalonians. He clearly says to test prophecies (plural), hold to the good and abstain from evil. It is a reach to assume the sifting of one prophecy in **1 Thessalonians 5**.

We should not be surprised that Paul wants prophecies weighed and tested. First of all because they were tested in the Old Testament. Secondly, though, Paul is personally aware of false prophets and teachers that have stepped into churches to deceive and destroy. Paul is always cautious, as we should be, of so called prophets. He speaks of false apostles in **2 Corinthians 11**.

### **2 Corinthians 11:12-13**

And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

Jesus warned of false prophets himself.

### **Mark 13:22**

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect

### **Matthew 7:15-16a**

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits.

Paul is constantly concerned in his letters of reminding his readers of the genuineness of his ministry for he knows that the ministry of any follower is only proved by their holding to truth and abandonment to Christ.

In **1 Corinthians 14:29** Paul wants prophecies weighed and tested just as he proclaimed in **1 Thessalonians 5**. We know he believed that prophets could be false because just a few verses ahead in **1 Corinthians 14:37-38** he proclaims that his message is a Word from the Lord and any prophet who proclaims in opposition to it is not recognized. We should weigh everything for truthfulness.

### **1 Corinthians 14:37-38**

If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

So, it is perfectly normal for Paul and us to test and weigh prophecies for their validity, and there is no reason for us to assume that the words of true prophets in the New Testament were any different than the infallible words of God that should be weighed as done in the Old Testament.

## **WHAT ABOUT AGABUS' PROPHECY**

There is one final example of New Testament prophecy that must be understood. In **Acts 21:10-11** a prophet named Agabus comes to Paul and foretells that Paul will be bound by the Jews when he goes to Jerusalem and delivered over to the Gentiles. However, when Luke records the story later in **Acts 21** we don't see the precision of Agabus' prophecy fulfilled. Some look to this as an example of a fallible prophecy, however, in **Act 28:17** Paul sees the prophecy of Agabus to have been accurately fulfilled. So, I don't believe this is an adequate example of prophecy that is mixed with errors.

## Tongues & Interpretation

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Onto the next controversial gift/s, speaking in tongues and the subsequent interpretation of those tongues.

We will define tongues as:

**Definition:** Biblical tongues are real languages (**Acts 2:4, 2:6-11**) not known to the speaker (**1 Corinthians 14:5**) gifted by the Spirit to some believers to proclaim the gospel (**Acts 2:11**), act as a sign of God's work (**Acts 10:44-46** (only sometimes confirming salvation)), and require interpretation for edification of the church (**1 Corinthians 14:5**).

Though this is not a fancy definition, we can define the interpretation of tongues as:

**Interpretation Definition:** The ability to understand a Spirit gifted language by means of either the revelation of God (to the speaker or another) or by knowing the language.

### 1. "Real languages not known to the speaker"

I won't spend much time on this point, but it must be understood that according to our best understanding of the word "tongues" in the Bible, it is always translated, and was historically thought of as a real human language. The only time tongues are defined, in **Acts 2**, it is clearly a language.

### **Acts 2:8-11**

And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

The same word for tongues (glō's-sä) in **Acts 2** is the same word used throughout the Bible to describe speaking in tongues. Based upon that, it is very difficult for me to see it interpreted any other way. We have to make a pretty large leap to change the definition of tongues to mean something other than tongues being human languages that are spoken by a human who does not know the language.

## **2. “gifted by the Spirit to some believers”**

Second, in our definition of tongues, as with prophecy, this gift is of course given by the Spirit. Not all believers speak in tongues. Paul is clear on that in **1 Corinthians 12:30**.

### **1 Corinthians 12:30**

Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

We could be tempted to look at **Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19** and assume that tongues are connected to salvation, however, of the 13 accounts of conversion in **Acts**, only three mention speaking in tongues as accompanying the conversion. Additionally, there is not one teaching from any of the apostles regarding tongues as an expectation at conversion. Therefore, it is not adequate to assume that tongues were/are a sign of conversion for all believers.

Finally the definition of tongues will end by emphasizing three primary ways that we can see tongues used.

## **3. “to proclaim the gospel”**

First, tongues are used to proclaim the gospel. In **Acts 2**, we see the vivid account of the day of Pentecost where believers begin speaking in tongues.

#### **Acts 2:5-11**

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

This account shows the use of tongues to preach the gospel to peoples of many various languages. They proclaimed the mighty works of God to the people.

#### **4. “act as a sign of God’s work”**

Second, and connected to the preaching of the gospel, we see tongues used as a sign to people. In **Acts 2**, the tongues did not only proclaim the mighty works of God, but they also were used as a sign to draw the crowd and get the attention of all in order for Peter to preach.

#### **Acts 2:6**

And at this sound [the rushing mighty wind] the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

#### **Acts 2:14**

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:

Later on we see tongues used as a sign to Peter to confirm that the Gentiles had received the gospel. Peter first preaches the gospel to a man named Cornelius who receives the gospel.

#### **Acts 10:44-46**

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.

One final note on tongues being a sign, we see in **1 Corinthians 14** that uninterpreted tongues are condemning to the hearer rather than edifying. This is contrary to many views today, for most of us would usually think that it would be a positive sign to us if we heard someone speaking in a tongue.

However, in **1 Corinthians 14** Paul does not see uninterpreted tongues as necessarily a good thing.

### **1 Corinthians 14:20-25**

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. 21 In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Paul quotes **Isaiah 28:11-13** and uses it to compare the condemning nature of uninterpreted tongues to the usefulness of prophecy. Tongues are a sign of condemnation to the hearer if you cannot understand them because there is no opportunity to hear and repent and believe in Jesus. On the other hand, prophecy can be understood by the mind and leads to repentance and faith.

So, we should be careful to look fondly on tongues that are not understood. Paul sees them as a sign of God's condemnation.

## **5. "and require interpretation for edification of the church"**

This leads into the third use for tongues which is for the edification of the church only through interpretation.

To see this we need to go back to **1 Corinthians 14** where Paul is again showing the greater use of prophecy over tongues.

### **1 Corinthians 14:5**

Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

Paul wants there to be interpretation of the tongue if it is to be spoken. His words are more crass later on in the chapter.

### **1 Corinthians 14:27-28**

If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

Paul blatantly says to shut your mouth if no one can interpret your tongue. This statement implies quite a few things about tongues. First, like prophecy, tongues are controllable. Otherwise, Paul would not expect the person with a tongue to hold their tongue if no one can interpret. Secondly, it implies there must be some way for an interpreter to show themselves to be able to interpret the tongue either through knowing the language or through God's miraculous giving them the understanding of the language. Last, the usefulness of tongues (only when interpreted) is on par with prophecy.

Paul is harsh on the uselessness of uninterpreted tongues throughout **1 Corinthians 14**. His point in all this is to show that spiritual gifts are meant for the body to be edified or built up.

### **1 Corinthians 14:12**

So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

Edification only can happen if the mind is engaged to understand what is said.

### **1 Corinthians 14:11**

but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

### **1 Corinthians 14:14-15a**

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also

Paul says you are as useless as a lifeless instrument when speaking in an uninterpreted tongue and he would rather speak five words with his mind than 10,000 words in a tongue.

So, tongues must be interpreted for edification to happen. And remember that spiritual gifts by definition are meant to build up the body of Christ.

## Gifts of Healing & Miracles

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The last controversial gifts will also be handled in tandem. Healings and miracles are both mentioned by Paul in **1 Corinthians 12** and examples are listed throughout the gospels and the book of Acts. We will define them as:

**Definition:** Uncommon but verifiable supernatural works of God (**Acts 15:12**) that are empowered by the Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:10**) to validate the messenger (**2**

**Corinthians 12:12**) and always are used to point people to God (**1 Kings 18:39**) and his Son (**John 14:11**) either leading to belief in Jesus (**John 20:30-31, Acts 9:32-35**) or edification (**1 Corinthians 12:7, Galatians 3:5**) of the church.

## 1. “Uncommon but verifiable supernatural works of God”

Why uncommon? Because they are. We do not read God’s word and leave with an understanding that these mighty works of God were moment by moment. Rather, they were used at specific times for specific purposes.

Additionally, the miracles are ground shaking. Lame men walk. Blind men healed. 5,000 are fed with one meal. Seas are parted. Dead people are raised to life. There is no doubt when God works miracles and healings that He has worked! We should expect the same thing when looking for healing and miracles today.

The uncommonness of miracles give us only records of them being accomplished and causing wonder among crowds, onlookers, and the individual healed or interacted with in that moment, or we read recountings of miracles to call to remembrance of the mighty works of God.

## 2. “empowered by the Spirit to validate the messenger”

Next, these Spirit empowered works are used to validate the person working the miracle (messenger). This is everywhere in the Bible.

In Exodus, Moses is told by God to show certain miracles to the people of Israel, so they will believe and follow Moses knowing that he is from God.

### **Exodus 4:8**

If they will not believe you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign.

Gideon in **Judges 6:36-40** asks God to work a miracle on a fleece in order to believe that God will be with Gideon. It’s as if Gideon needs self-validation from God.

Elijah in **1 Kings 18:36-38** shows the power of God working through him by embarrassing the false prophets with fire from heaven. It was probably the greatest road win ever.

And that is just a few examples in the Old Testament.

Look at Jesus, whose life and message was full of signs and wonders that validated him as the Son of God.

**John 14:11**

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

**John 20:30-31**

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

These verses barely scratch the surface. In a few minutes of study I found John 2:23; 5:36; 6:2; 7:31; 10:25, 32, 37, 38; 15:24, and Matthew 11:20-23.

Jesus, put simply, validated himself to be who he was through the ministry of miracles, healings, signs, and wonders.

**3. “always are used to point people to God and his Son either leading to belief in Jesus or edification of the church.”**

Finally, miracles and healings always point people to God and his Son either leading to salvation or to the edification of the Church.

**“Leading to salvation”**

There are many places we could turn to in God’s word to see that the supernatural work of God point people to salvation. Acts 8:4-12, Acts 9:32-35, Acts 9:36-42.

However, the greatest miracle of all time will do for us.

**John 20:24-29**

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to

him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus rose from the dead showing himself to Thomas leading to the glorifying of God.

And it is that same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead that is living inside us.

**Romans 8:11**

“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

The Spirit works miracles for the Glory of God!

**“For the edification of the Church”**

When referring to edification, we see a couple examples that seem to imply that miracles are used to edify the body. In **1 Corinthians 12:9-10** and **12:28** we see miracles and gifts of healing listed as spiritual gifts. Almost in the same breath, Paul says that these gifts are for the Church.

**1 Corinthians 12:7**

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

By implication, we would say that healings and miracles are good for the body. How are they good? Well, they are good in the same way that they are good for those who repent and believe in the gospel. They show God to be powerful and sovereign. In **Galatians 3:5**, Paul gives is a hint of this.

**Galatians 3:5**

Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—

At the very least the miracles showed the power of the Spirit at work in the churches of Galatia. It seems to be a sign that Paul refers the Galatians back to in order to remind them that they had received the Spirit. In other words, “how can you think that these miracles that God has worked among you are the result of anything other than the grace that you received in Jesus Christ.” It’s just like the Red Sea crossing in Exodus and how the Israelites were reminded of it to remember that God is faithful.

We don't have a lot to read into for edification of the body but can confidently say at the least that the purpose of those miracles in the church and to the world showed the power of God! Any claimed miracle that praises self or any man should be rejected as evil.

A final caution should be given to those who would validate God solely on signs.

### **1 Corinthians 1:22-23**

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Paul says that Jews seek signs. Those who rejected the Son of God kept seeking signs when they had the Savior right in front of them. Jesus said in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus that a sign of one returning from the dead would not convince those who were living in sin. They have the law and the prophets. They should believe them.

### **Luke 16:27-31**

27 And he [the rich man] said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him [Lazarus] to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

We have the risen Savior. Believe! Do not put all your confidence in seeking signs.

## **Conclusion:**

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May God, through the Scriptures, shape us to the core into the image of Christ.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.