

Sign Gifts

Part 1

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[00:00:00] All right, now we're going to whiz through our topic. But you're not going to just sit there, you're going to have to look up the passages, so you can do a bit of work. Firstly, I want to speak about M&Ms.

Well, really Ms, not M&Ms. So first, we should define our terms, really.

What have I got up there? Yes, we want to look at sign gifts, and really we want to know what this means. You see, there are gifts and there are gifts, there's miracles and there's miracles. There are miracles which have a special significance, and then there are, I suppose, gracious interventions by God in the normal, well, normal history of the church. You've seen how God has helped you in this or that matter, and you say, well, that was a miracle. But I'm not talking about the general, gracious, and sometimes unexpected interventions of God in our lives.

[00:01:05] And these interventions, I would say, are without explanation. They're truly a work of God. It's not man's doing. We'd say that was a miracle. Someone's been very, very sick and the Lord has graciously healed them. But we're looking now at the first M, that's sign gifts, signs and wonders, revelatory gifts. And there have been periods in the Bible when there were what I call revelatory gifts, gifts which reveal something about the mind of God about a special situation or occasion. So, I don't want you coming up to me afterwards and say, oh, well, I had a miracle. I had a bad foot and it suddenly got better. I'm not talking about that kind of miracle. Now, you might think the Bible's full of miracles, but in a way, [00:02:01] peppered throughout Scripture, there are miracles here and there. You might say creation's a miracle. Well, yes, granted. It's a divine intervention. But I'm talking about a sign miracle which has something to say, something to communicate the mind of God about a situation or a circumstance. And although the Bible, you might say, is peppered with miracles, there seem to be three periods of concentration. And you see, I've got two blanks here. And the first period of miracles really occurs at a very special time of when the children of Israel were formed into a nation and during the period of Moses's ministry and the events surrounding that. And each time there was a miracle then in the days of Moses in the Pentateuch, in the first five books of, or especially in the Exodus, especially then. The purpose of the miracle at that time was to validate the message and [00:03:04] the testimony of Moses. So that was the first period of miracles. Then there's a sort of period of calm, not many miracles, not many interventions in a special way. And then there was a second period and that was at a low ebb in Israel's history, in their spiritual condition. And that

was in the days of Elijah and they did mighty miracles.

And the miracles then validated their ministry. So you've got to bear in mind that the Bible, although has miracles here and there, there are these concentrated periods. And the third one is the one that we're particularly interested in because we might say we're living in New Testament times. We're living in the times of the church and the day of grace. And the New Testament, of course, was written at the beginning of this day of grace, but it has validity for us today. And the third period takes place around the time of the Lord Jesus Christ when he came into the [00:04:06] world. You might notice also that when he came, there was a great eruption of satanic, demonic activity. Why? The son of God was here. And so there was this opposition arose. Of course, Satan's still at work. So there were miracles in the time of Christ and in the time of his apostles. And we're going to have a look at just a few brief verses. You're going to have to check them out with me. Hebrews chapter two, verses three and four. And it speaks of the great salvation. Oh yeah, I've got it written there as well. Look at that. That's good. So you don't have to ask me what verse it was. The great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord. There you have it, the Lord. And was confirmed unto us. That's not us in this room, but that's the apostles. Unto us, by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and [00:05:07] wonders and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. So those spectacular revelatory gifts, of course, they were governed by the Lord's will. It wasn't by their own will. We already learned that in the normal course of church life. It has to be by the will of the Lord, not by the will of the participants. And this verse actually confirms what the Lord said at the end of Mark's gospel. Mark chapter 16, verse 17 to 18, not by any means a disputed passage of scripture. It says this, and these signs shall follow them that believe in my name. They shall cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up servants. And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. And they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. And that after, that the [00:06:04] special sign gifts were then to confirm the ministry of the apostles, to confirm, to demonstrate that in effect, a new way of dealing with people had begun, a new dispensation, a new administration in the ways of God's councils had been set on with the commencement of the church. It was being introduced by God, although he used men to do this. And you notice that when the Hebrew writer speaks or writes, should I say, writers normally write, when he writes, he uses the past tense. He says, let's look here, after it was, I think that's past tense, at the first spoken, that's past tense, through the Lord, it was confirmed, past tense again. So he's looking back at what was done, not what was [00:07:01] occurring, not what was current, but what had been established by the validation of the new work that God was doing at that beginning by his apostles. 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. This is a citation from Acts 5, check it out, verse 15. At the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were taking place among the people. For example, Tabitha died, sometimes called Dorcas. And it was, how did she get raised? They're all the brethren there, they're all mourning, they're all weeping. No, it needed an apostolic intervention in a very special way. It was the apostle Peter came and wrought a miracle by restoring her to life. And Peter sent them all out, you can read it there, and knelt down and prayed [00:08:02] and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha arise. And she opened her eyes and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And you'll find that in, it's not referred there, but that's Acts 9.40. And Paul also wrote of Christ's miraculous accomplishments through him. I think that's in Romans 15, in fact it's verse 18 and 19.

And he speaks of the power of signs and wonders and the power of the Spirit.

And then in this last reference here, 2 Corinthians 12.12, the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all patience or with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles.

So, all these verses demonstrate to me that the original revelatory gifts, the miraculous wonders which had a significance, were to confirm the validity of the message. Having established [00:09:04] that, having demonstrated that the Christian gospel was the, what should we say, the real McCoy. It was substantiated by these special gifts. Well, that was sufficient. They got the seal of approval by the Holy Spirit. It didn't need any more. You can read the record. You can read the reliable document. It's called the New Testament. And the record of it demonstrates that God approved of those men he sent with the gospel. Now, the next question is, let's see, press that, their role today. Well, you might say, have they got a role today? I mean, that's what I was asked to speak about, their role today. A bit difficult to speak about the role today when I've just said it was introductory. But you know, there are, Brother Jeff has explained about the role of gifts. But I'm talking about different kind of gifts. Remember, there's M&Ms, gifts, G&Gs. I don't know that you can buy those. But we're [00:10:03] talking about the sign gifts. Are there any sign gifts today? Does God work miracles today? Well, I've said a little bit about that. God does intervene sometimes, especially on our behalf. He answers the prayers of believers. You pray. You have a problem. You pray. That's a good thing to do. But the gifts, the gift, the gift of miracles, I believe, is not present today. God works miracles. But the gift of miracles, the gift of these extraordinary revelatory things are not manifested today. And that's evident. The gifts seen in the New Testament were where an individual had a supernatural ability as a result of the Holy Spirit upon them and within them. But the gift of healing, it's clear, I would say, it began to fade even during the Apostle Paul's life in his earthly ministry. And the following examples show this. I've cited the scriptures. You can check them out. When Paul was writing to Timothy, he advised him on his health. He said, [00:11:01] don't drink water exclusively. Use a little. Emphasize that. A little wine. He didn't say drink no wine. He's not a prohibitionist, but he says a little. Be careful. Use a little for the sake of your stomach and for your often infirmities. Yeah. And he could have said, well, look, Tim, I'm coming over. I'm going to heal you. No, he says, use this remedy.

And secondly, Paul has, to Timothy chapter 4, Paul leaves Trophimus behind at Miletus.

Why did he do that? He was sick. He was sick. Why did he leave him sick? He could have healed him surely. No, already this gift was departing from the church. The confirmatory proving facet of the church of these gifts had been applied to the early message of the apostles. It was no longer needed even in the apostolic period. He left him sick. And then why didn't Paul, who had raised Eutychus from the dead in Acts 20, [00:12:05] verse 10, you know how the young man had fallen asleep because he'd preached too long. Hope no one's falling asleep, especially at the bank. I don't see anyone yet. Why didn't he heal Trophimus as he had raised Eutychus?

Well, you see, this had already gone. This ability, this gift was no longer necessary.

The confirmation of Paul's ministry had been seen at the beginning. And then in Philippians chapter 2, verse 27, we get another example of how Paul doesn't feel it's right to heal a fellow Christian. For indeed he, that's Epaphroditus, was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him. He didn't say I raised him from his sickness or I laid hands on him, I healed him. No, God had mercy on him and not only on him, but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. You see, Paul was concerned. He didn't have [00:13:02] that gift anymore, although he was an apostle and he could exercise in former times, the signs of an apostle. So then the question is, does God heal today in response to prayer?

I've already demonstrated that in a few words. It's important to remember that God does heal. He may use doctors, he may use medicine, but God is in control of our lives and does care for us. And

he still does work in special and various ways. We do not intend to put limits on God's power. But there is biblical evidence that the gift of healing has been taken away and there are not people today who have the special power to heal in that remarkable way that was evident in the days of the New Testament. Now the next question, time runs out so quick here, is the issue of tongues. And here I've called it earthly languages.

[00:14:01] And in fact, if you check out a good Bible dictionary, you can buy them here, you'll see that and or a lexicon, you'll see that tongues is tongues is earthly languages. It's not gibberish. It might sound like gibberish. When you hear a Dutchman speak, you think, gosh, what's that? But it's still a tongue. Another Dutchman will understand it. It gets even worse when they speak Swahili. Now, the gift of tongues was the supernatural ability to speak an earthly foreign language without special training. You know, it'd be great for all those who pretend to speak in tongues as they could be missionaries in foreign lands. They needn't go to language school. But those organizations, those churches that pretend to speak in tongues often have the biggest language scores. I don't know why that is. Anyway, tongues really, it's used in the New Testament, refers either of this organ, which is moving between my lips, the tongue, or it means [00:15:03] the sound produced by it. In other words, the language spoken. And we can look at some scriptures in Acts 2, 4, 6, and also look at verse 11 as well. It says, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues or languages, exactly as in verse 11, as the Spirit enabled them. And when they heard this sound, the crowd came together in bewilderment because one heard them, each one heard them speaking in his own language. The gift of tongues was Spirit motivated speech in a particular language. And I think that this first section of verses demonstrates just that. But there's further information on this. The gift of tongues had a purpose. It was particularly assigned to unbelieving Israel. [00:16:06] And you'll find that in 1 Corinthians 14, 22.

If you want to know what this reference is, it relates to the former, it just shows you how language is just language. You can check that out. So tongues, it says in 1 Corinthians 14, verse 22, tongues then are assigned not to those who believe, but to unbelievers. Tongues were assigned to the Jewish nation that they were to be judged for their unbelief. And God had predicted that a long time ago in the days of Moses, Deuteronomy 28, verse 49 is a good verse to check it out. And the Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand. It was to be a judgment upon them. And Isaiah would have to prophesy along these lines as well. He would say, Isaiah [00:17:01] 28, verse 9 through 13. And he uses this very strange language, sounds very strange in English. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. For with stammering lips and another tongue shall he speak to this people. Check out the whole verse. I haven't quoted the whole section to you because of time. It's very interesting. There's a revised version of this verse. It's very interesting. There's a revised version of the German Elberfelder, which transliterates the Hebrew. I'm not going to attempt too much Hebrew here, but in verse 10, it says this, so it won't be German you're hearing, it'll be Germanized Hebrew. Instead of precept upon precept, precept upon precept. It has in that edition of the Elberfelder Bible. [00:18:02] Yes, it sounds strange, doesn't it? It sounds as if you've got a stammering tongue. It sounds that you're speaking in a strange way. Well, it's just like an Englishman listening to a Dutchman. He thinks, what on earth is that? It's just with a stammering tongue. It just means nonsense. But it was still a language. It was still a tongue. It was still comprehensible to the original. And the English translators have put it right, and so do most normal German translations. It means precept upon precept, precept upon precept. And that repetitive nature means to demonstrate the effect in the ear of the sound of a foreign language. It was a judgment of God upon his people. They would hear this. Now, there are false claims today. There

are some people who say they speak in the tongue of angels. Well, you know what the word angel means, don't you? You get it in evangel. You use it often. You say he's an evangelist. It means a good message, a messenger. An angel is a messenger. Well, if he speaks gibberish to you, if he says, [00:19:05] you say, what is he saying? It means nothing. And indeed, it means nothing. It's nonsense, what I just said. It's not even a language. Well, that means if you speak in the language of angels and you speak nonsense, you're not true to what an angel is. An angel is a communicator of a divine message. What is coherent? What is comprehensible? The tongue of angels must be the most elevated and excellent of messages. And you shall call his name Jesus. What a great message that was. It wasn't unintelligible. It was intelligible. It could be understood. So, there are many false claims of people who reckon that they're speaking in the tongues of angels. Well, let us hear them speak clear and plain. The truth of God's word. Of course, many who make these false claims, they don't heed the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14, 34-36, where there's a [00:20:06] prohibition to women speaking in public in matters religious, making a verbal contribution in public. That's prohibited in scripture. But they will all do it. 80-90% of those congregations, women disobeying scripture. And then they say that comes from the Holy Spirit. It doesn't make sense. But there are other scriptures, you know, that entitle us to be cautious, sceptical, suspicious. 1 John chapter 4 verse 1. It says, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirit. Someone says they speak in tongues. Someone says they raise the dead. Ask a few questions. Someone says they can heal. You say, well, let me show me the person.

Look at the evidence. Believe not every spirit. Try the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many, many, a whole army of smooth talkers have gone into the world. Many false [00:21:04] prophets have gone out into the world. That's what it says. 1 John 4 verse 1. And then there's another thing. Many people boast themselves of false gifts. They try to hype themselves up on the matter. Do you know Proverbs 25 verse 14 gives very good advice. It says, Whosoever boasts himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain. It just looks like it, but it's not real. Well, right, the last one. I'm counting on parallax to give me an extra two minutes. All right. Are you spirit filled? Are you thirsty for speaking in tongues? Are you wanting to be healing and raising the dead? You know, is that what being spirit filled is all [00:22:02] about? Doing those things. Almost as if you're like a magician. No, I don't think being spirit filled is having a pretense of doing these things. Being spirit filled is neither a vain pretense of a sanctimonious atmosphere generating pious talk and pious movements.

What is being filled by the spirit? Well, there are a number of references here. We mustn't really confuse them with these other concepts in scripture, walking by the spirit, led by the spirit, that we want to be that as well. And we haven't really time to explore the whole. But being filled, let's look at what being filled with the spirit is in Ephesians chapter five. It says there, 18 through to 21, you can read the whole section, but I'll just highlight a few words. Be not drunk with wine where is in excess, but be filled with the spirit. [00:23:07] A man filled with wine doesn't do what he would do. He does the things, quite the contrary, he does the things he wouldn't do when he was sober. He's under the influence of alcohol. He's under the influence of another force. He manifests a different character. And so Christians have filled with the Holy Spirit, they exhibit another character and radically from different from the one that once marked them before they were indulged by the spirit of God. And when filled with the spirit, you will talk about the things of God in the language of scripture. Look at the verse 19, speaking to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. You'll be moving along the Christian pathway with rejoicing, singing. The Christian's heart will have a tune in his soul. You'll be singing to the Lord, making melody in your heart to the Lord. [00:24:04] You know, all people like to be happy. They want to be exhilarated with joy, to feel good, to be on top of everything. There's nothing wrong with that. God wants joyous, excited, happy and uplifted people. He wants you

to be like that. He wants you to be filled with the spirit. But the problem lies in how happiness is generated. How are these things manifested? Some people think they can linger over a bottle. Sadly, some even over a narcotic. But those things don't bring you happiness. And best keep away from those things. But then what is the source of a Christian's joy? Well, Ephesians 5 tells us, says don't get drunk with wine, that's dissipation. Paul doesn't try to prove that drunkenness is incompatible with Christianity, he just commands it. He simply gives the command. Once a person became a Christian, he says goodbye to the life [00:25:02] he once lived in drunken debauchery. The party life has no place in the believer's life. So the spirit in the bottle. If Christians are not to be drunk with wine, where do they find their joy and happiness? Well, the answer is in Ephesians. It's in Christ. Ephesians chapter 5:18. Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the spirit.

Your thrills, your exhilaration, your happiness results of being filled with the Holy Spirit of God and not from being filled with wine. You might be shocked at the language of this verse. You might be shocked at the way we're expressing things. But it sounds like Paul is saying you should be drunk with the Holy Spirit. But in fact, he's not saying that. There's to be self-control, even in the matters of the spirit. [00:26:01] But the observers, when they looked at the apostles on the day of Pentecost, they thought they were drunk. They observed that. Acts 2 verses 1 to 4, and 13 to 18. But here's the idea. Being filled with the spirit results in behavior marked by joy, boldness. Even a mild person, even a timid character can become bold and unafraid when living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And that sounds like what happens when a person gets drunk, perhaps. But Paul is actually making contrast, not a comparison, between wine and the Holy Spirit. Wine controls a person completely and works evil in his heart and life. But when the Holy Spirit works in our lives, when he controls us completely, he empowers you to do what is marked by true righteousness and holiness. And the Spirit's influence alone provides divine fuel for a different, free, bold life lived for God's glory. Now, it says here, be filled.

[00:27:09] You'll notice Ephesians 5 has a positive command, be filled with the Spirit. What does that mean? Well, I'll tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean be indwelt by the Spirit. If you're a Christian, you're indwelt. Paul never says be baptized in the Spirit. You'd be made to drink of the one Spirit when you were converted. He doesn't say be sealed with the Spirit. When you believe the gospel of your salvation, you are sealed with the Spirit of promise. Ephesians 1 verse 13, all three events occurred the moment you truly believed the gospel of your salvation. I believe. But he says be filled. Instead, Paul's command has something else in view.

And though it might sound a little odd in regular English, he's saying be continually filled, be kept filled, be kept filled with the Spirit. He's actually saying be continually letting the Spirit of God who is already in you control you. He wants us to be [00:28:03] filled. It isn't a second work of grace. It isn't a second experience. It's a step or a step on a higher level. It's normal Christianity being led by the Spirit of God. And to be filled by the Spirit means you are continually surrendering your will, your mind, your body, your talents, your treasures, every air in your life to his control. This is very important. A Spirit-filled person submits to others. Look at the passage. The Spirit-filled wife submits to her husband. The Spirit-filled husband loves his wife. Spirit-filled children obey their parents. A Spirit-filled father doesn't provoke his children to anger. A Spirit-filled employee works diligently for his employer. And a Spirit-filled employer is fair to his employees. All these are manifestations of the Spirit-filled life. So you ask, well, is this let go and let God do something? No, there's a responsibility.

[00:29:08] And here is the responsibility, and it's allied to being filled with the Spirit. It says, let the Word of God, or rather the Word of Christ, dwell richly in you. Colossians 3:16.

The effect of the Word of Christ dwelling in you is an exact parallel to what happens when you are filled with the Spirit of God. When you are filled with the Spirit. It's all there. Singing, submission, love, obedience, gentleness, good parenting, diligence, fairness, all these features, these lovely features, are found in someone who has the Word of God dwelling in them and is filled by the Spirit. They go hand in hand. And these should be manifest in our lives if we profess to be Christians. Sometimes we're looking for the spectacular. Sometimes we're looking [00:30:03] for the super miraculous. But this thing, being filled by the Spirit, is normal Christianity.

The Spirit-filled life I close is overflowing with gratitude, joy, right relationships, good behavior. Quite a contrast to those enslaved by alcohol, and quite a contrast to those who pretend to have things they don't have at all. You may not be seeking your joy in drugs or alcohol or other things, but I want to ask you, are you seeking to be filled with the Spirit of God? His resources are immediately available. They're in the book, the Bible. Read that. Be occupied with that book. Be occupied with the subject of that book, our Lord Jesus Christ. The book is full of him. And if you want to be full of Christ, you'll find that you'll be filled with the Spirit. May the Lord help you and bless you. Yeah, that's all I've got to say except an advert.

[00:31:04] The question of tongues is quite, I could have said a lot more about it, but for some it's quite an issue. Here is quite a, I would say, very comprehensive book on the subject. It deals with it and it's 3.95 if you buy it from me. Nick's offering 25% discount, and if you haven't read it then you'll be ignorant of an awful lot of matter, at least 160 pages of matter. It's well worth spending your money on that book. It's a really good book. It's called All About Speaking in Tongues. It addresses the question of tongues, but it also has side issues which are very, very informative and I believe that is the best book on the subject that you can get here today. So, I think Nick's got a pile of them, and if you haven't got the book in your library already, go buy it. If you haven't got a library, buy this as the first book in your library and keep collecting. Thank you.