

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: VARIOUS TEXTS**

To gain a general understanding of the Biblical evidence of spiritual gifts.

Healings, Miracles, and Discernment

Rounding out the so-called, “Miraculous Gifts,” are the gifts of healing and miracles. We will also discuss how the gift of discernment works (and notably, how it doesn’t work). We will examine the textual evidence for each, and pay particular attention to some interesting grammatical differences as well.

Gifts of Healing

There are obviously several moments in the New Testament where healing occurs, and so it should not surprise us to find this gift listed here. However, what is strikingly unique about it is that it is in the *plural*, not the singular form. In other words, there is the GIFT of knowledge which seems to be in operation for a long span of time (if not a lifetime). There is the GIFT of wisdom which operates the same way. For these gifts (and most for that matter), the gift supplies the ability. Consider, for a moment, that someone gifts you a jacket for Christmas. Now that you have received the gift, you can put it on everyday and be warmed by it. If someone asked you to show them the jacket, you would merely put it on and show them. That’s how most of the gifts seem to operate. The gifts of healing, however, seem to be more like a bag of chocolates. Once you’ve eaten the chocolates, there are no more. If someone asked you to show them that gift you received, you couldn’t, because it’s already been used. This explains why healing seems to be random, and not consistent in the New Testament (apart from Jesus, of course).

AN OLD TESTAMENT PRIMER

Before we examine the New Testament, let’s gain an understanding of the Old Testament’s view of healing.

Genesis 20:17

“Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.”

Exodus 15:26

“If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.”

Numbers 12:13

“And Moses cried to the LORD, “O God, please heal her—please.”

Isaiah 53:5

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

(See also Jer. 3:22; Lam. 2:13; Hos. 6:1)

JESUS' HEALINGS

Understanding that God, and ONLY God, is the healer in the Old Testament provides a good backdrop for our understanding of what the New Testament is conveying regarding Jesus. Jesus heals with absolute authority. It is not to set up a standard by which we are to also heal, but rather it demonstrates the deity of Christ.

Matthew 13:13-15

“This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. 15 For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’” (See Is. 6:9-10)

Matthew 17:16-18

“‘And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.’ 17 And Jesus answered, ‘O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.’ 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.”

Matthew 10:1; 8

“And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.”

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.”

APOSTOLIC HEALINGS

Jesus explicitly gave authority to the 12 to heal, and even they recognize the true power of healing. Below are some examples.

Acts 9:34

“And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose.”

Acts 28:8

“It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him.”

2 Timothy 4:20

“Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.”

OTHER TEXTS

The following are the remaining verses regarding healing that are not applied by Jesus or His apostles.

James 5:16

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Revelation 13:3

“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.”

Workings of Miracles

Below is a look at various texts regarding miracles.

OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 4:21

“And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.”

1 Chronicles 16:12

“Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.”

(See also Psalm 105:5)

NEW TESTAMENT

Acts 19:11

“And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul.”

Galatians 3:1-6

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 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— 6 just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness?’”

Hebrews 2:1-4

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

Discernment

Only in 1 Corinthians 12 do we find this gift, but it is connected to various other passages regarding spiritual warfare. Grudem defines this as, “a special ability to recognize the influence of the Holy Spirit or of demonic spirits in a person.” Below are a few passages helpful to understanding this gift.

Mark 9:25; 29

“And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

“And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

Luke 13:11-13

“And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.” 13 And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.”

Acts 16:16

“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.”

1 John 4:1

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

1 John 4:6

We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.