
THE ENDING OF MIRACLES

(Part 3)

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) What two chapters discuss the ending of miracles?
- 2) What does the word "grace" refer to in Eph 4:7?
- 3) How widespread were miraculous powers?
- 4) Who succeeded other apostles after they died?
- 5) What's the primary difference between an evangelist and a teacher?
- 6) What is "THE faith"?
- 7) What's the difference between "*Unity of the Spirit*" and "*Unity of the Faith*"?
- 8) What special problem did the church have before the NT scriptures were completed?

INTRODUCTION

The NT has two major chapters dealing with the ending of miracles.

- 1 Cor 13 (well known)
- Eph 4 (lesser known)

In this study we will examine Eph 4 and notice what it says in regards to the ending of miracles.

VERSE 7

Ephesians 4:7

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

"But" – links us with the first part of the chapter. Unity is described in vv3-6, **but** unity does not mean uniformity.

Only one body, **but** different gifts.

Unity does not mean everyone is doing the same job.

"to each one ... grace was given" – "grace" here refers to miraculous gifts.

We should not be surprised when "grace" is used to describe miraculous power. It was graciousness on God's part to supply miraculous power and thereby give evidence of **His workings – His approval**.

Even in this Ephesian epistle, "grace" is clearly used to refer to miraculous abilities:

Ephesians 3:7-8

⁷ of which **I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.**

⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, **this grace was given, that I should preach** among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

"grace" – here the privilege and power necessary to be an apostle.

Romans 12:3-6

³ For I say, **through the grace given to me**, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

⁶ Having then gifts differing according to **the grace that is given to us**, let us use them: **if prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;



This fits Eph 4 exactly. There is one body, but diversity of gifts. This is the theme of Eph 4. Eph 4:3-6 stresses the unity of Christians, but there are diversities of gifts and functions.

WIDESPREAD RECEPTION

The ability to work miracles was widespread among the believers.

- Many of the Christians had these abilities.
- Each member had differing abilities.

1 Corinthians 12:4-13

⁴ There are **diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit**.

⁵ There are **differences of ministries, but the same Lord**.

⁶ And there are **diversities of activities**, but it is **the same God** who works all in all.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is **given to each one** for the profit of all:

⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to **each one individually** as He wills.

¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and **have all been made to drink into one Spirit**.

"given to each one" (v7) – this corresponds with Eph 4:7, "*Unto every one of us is given grace.*" Miraculous powers were very wide spread.

- According to Acts 2:17-18 there would be no discrimination in the distribution of gifts.
- According to Acts 8:17 the Samaritans all had hands laid on them – no discrimination.
- According to Acts 19:6 all the **Ephesians** [who we're studying about] had hands laid on them.

"have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (v13) – widespread reception of gifts; no discrimination.

- Each member had a different part to play.
- Each one was given a miraculous gift to help the entire body.
- No one's gift was for their own personal profit – but for the entire body.

"distributing to each one individually as He wills" (v11) – widespread reception of gifts. The Spirit determined who got what gift. This is what we read in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:7

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given **according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

Jesus gave the gift as He saw that each had the ability to use the gift.

- **Much ability = much measure**
- **Little ability = little measure**

VERSE 8

Ephesians 4:8

⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

The scene is an emperor coming home from war with a long processional of prisoners. Christ ascends to heaven as a victorious king leading "captivity" (sin & death) as a POWs.

Death had held men captive since the beginning of time. Christ resurrected and led this "captivity" as His own captive.

"gave gifts" – spiritual gifts were given

Acts 2:33

³³ "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Jesus taught that before miraculous powers could be given, He Himself had to first ascend into heaven (Jn 16:7).

VERSE 9

Ephesians 4:9-10

⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

The fact that Jesus "ascended" implies a previous "descent."

"into the lower parts of the earth" – not the best parts of the earth (king's palaces), but to the less desirable places (Nazareth). He left the splendors of heaven above and came to live in dirty, despicable circumstances.

"that He might fill all things" – i.e. that He might "fulfill" (ASV) all things.

VERSE 11

Ephesians 4:11

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Some gifts were given so men could fulfill different functions in the church – so they could act in certain official capacities:

FIRST: There were the apostles and prophets. Their function was to reveal the will of God and write it down for future generations.

- 1) **Apostles** – the 12 and Paul. They left no successors. Their teachings became the final rule of faith. They now function through the written word they left behind.
- 2) **Prophets** – men like Mark & Luke. These made known the will of God after it was revealed to the apostles. They spoke by inspiration.

SECOND: There were evangelists. Their function was to "*plant*" the word of God.

- 3) **Evangelists** – men like Philip. They went about announcing the "good news" of the gospel. They traveled about and preached in various places.

NOTE: Planting the seed does not necessarily mean an evangelist has to move from place to place every six months.

Many years ago there was an attitude among some brethren that a true evangelist could not live in one place more than about six months.

A close examination of Philip will reveal an evangelist may settle down in one place and do his work of planting the seed. Notice carefully:

- Philip is the only man in the entire Bible explicitly called an "evangelist" (Acts 21:8). (Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5), but Philip was the only one explicitly and actually called an "evangelist.")

- In Acts 8 he baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch and according to the last verse of that chapter he came to Caesarea. That is the last we hear of him for a while.
 - In Acts 21 we read about him again. This is a time lapse of about 22 years!
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THIRD: There were pastors and teachers. Their function was to "water" the word of God.

- 4) **Pastors** – elders in the church. Note that the preacher and the pastor were two different men.
- 5) **Teachers** – a different office than evangelist. These stayed home and "watered" what was planted by the evangelist.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

⁶ I **planted**, Apollos **watered**, but God gave the increase.

⁷ So then neither he who **plants** is anything, nor he who **waters**, but God who gives the increase.

Two separate men and two separate jobs. One planted, the other watered. Both were important, but they were not the same job.

NOTE: It is no disgrace to be a "teacher" in the church. You don't have to be a "preacher" to be important and to fulfill an important role.

VERSE 12

Ephesians 4:12

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Here are three purposes of miraculous "gifts":

- Equip the saints
- The work of ministry (service)
- Edifying (building-up) of the body of Christ

In those early days Christians did not have a completed instruction-manual (NT) which they could consult. Hence, until the NT scriptures could be completed, miraculous gifts enabled those people to function as the church.

A diversity of gifts working for one common goal.

VERSE 13

Ephesians 4:13

¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

"till" – miraculous gifts were limited in duration.

"till we all come to the unity of the faith" – not personal faith (subjective), but objective – the system of faith.

Acts 6:7

⁷ ... a great many of the priests were obedient to **the faith**.

Acts 13:8

⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer ... withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from **the faith**.

Acts 14:22

²² [Paul & Barnabas were] strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in **the faith**, ...

Acts 16:5

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in **the faith**, ...

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ Examine yourselves as to whether you are in **the faith**. ...

Galatians 1:23

³ But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches **the faith** which he once tried to destroy."

1 Timothy 4:1

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from **the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

Jude 1:3

³ ... earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints.

"till we all come to the unity of the faith" – means miraculous gifts were given till we are able to have unity based upon "the faith" (NT scriptures). Then the miracles end.

Unity of the Spirit	=	Unity of the Faith
1) One body 2) One Spirit 3) One hope 4) One Lord 5) One faith 6) One baptism 7) One Father		1) One body 2) One Spirit 3) One hope 4) One Lord 5) One faith 6) One baptism 7) One Father

Same results, just different process used to achieve those results.

Unity of the Spirit	Unity of the Faith
Unity produced by <i>direct</i> revelation of the Spirit.	Unity produced from the <i>written</i> revelation of the Spirit.

The Spirit then in the man (producing unity) is now in the book (producing unity).

Spiritual gifts were given until the same job accomplished by miraculous gifts, could be produced by the written word.

"till we all come to ... the knowledge of the Son of God" (ἐπίγνωσις) – lit. "full knowledge"

Knowledge about Jesus then was fragmented. One member supplemented the other with the portion of knowledge he had. The written word now gives us a complete knowledge.

"to a perfect man" – "a full grown man" (ASV).

The church, while in possession of spiritual gifts, was a child. When the word was completed, the church matured:

1 Corinthians 13:11

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

VERSES 14-15

Ephesians 4:14

¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the **trickery** of men, in the **cunning** craftiness of **deceitful** plotting,

Before the NT scriptures were completed the church was often "tossed to and fro."

Some in the church had the gift of "discernment" – to tell truth from error (1 Cor 12:10; cf. 1 Jn 4:1).

Ephesians 4:15

¹⁵ but, speaking the truth **in love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ;

"speaking the truth in love" – is contrasted with "tricky" men using "cunning craftiness" to "deceive."

We must speak the truth, but we must be careful to speak with love. Love is the only motive.

This does NOT mean:

- We tolerate error.
- We can't be bold.

This DOES mean:

- We try not to intentionally hurt people.
- We try to be diplomatic.
- We offer a solution to those who have committed error.

Finding fault is easy. Offering a solution to the fault is the most helpful.

ILL: Dave Ramsey is a modern example of how this works.

People call in to Dave Ramsey with all sorts of money problems. Dave agrees with them that they have done stupid things with their money. They paid "stupid tax."

But after showing where they have done wrong, Dave begins to offer solutions:

- First: Make sure you have food on the table and the lights are on.
- Second: Get all your bills together and pay off the smallest one first and just minimum on the other bills.

- Third: After paying the smallest bill off, move to the next bill. You've been making the minimum payment on this bill, but now add the amount you were paying on the smallest that just got paid off.

This is the "snowball" approach. This is helpful. This is love. Love gives people hope and actually helps them.

Preaching the truth "in love" not only helps people see they have committed sin, but it provides solutions from the scriptures so people can find a way out.

NOTE: "*Finding a way out*" does not always mean you get to *have your cake and eat it too*.

Some people have committed sins which have wrecked their lives permanently. Maybe they're going to go to prison. There is no reversing some of these consequences.

But "*finding a way out*" means getting forgiveness from God so you won't have to answer to God for this sin on Judgment Day.

Miraculous gifts allowed the brethren to "speak the truth in love" before the NT scriptures were completed.

VERSE 16

Ephesians 4:16

¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Each member in the church has a contribution to make. We often fall into a bad habit of stressing certain offices and works. Each person has his job and that job is important.

If the members are all functioning properly, the church will be built up – self-edifying – deriving strength from the head!

CONCLUSION

Once again, we see that miracles were limited in duration. They would not continue forever. They would last "*till*" "*the faith*" was completed.

We are not at a disadvantage.