

SOMETHING BETTER THAN MIRACLES

1 CORINTHIANS 12:30-31 • TV-049B

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1 Corinthians 12:30-31

“Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”

Now the message I have for you today is dealing with an important subject. And it's a subject that is being questioned today. It's applicable to our very hour.

Now we're going to school today. We're going to look into the Scripture. I'm going to be speaking to you on this subject: **“SOMETHING BETTER THAN MIRACLES.”**

You hear people say “I believe in miracles, I believe in healing.” I'm going to give you something better than miracles and something better than healing.

Turn to **1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse: 30**. Now turn to the Scripture; let's look at it. You mark it in your Bible and follow along as I read it, **1 Corinthians 12:30:**

“Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way.” Or Paul says, “I show you something better.”

“Do all speak with tongues? Do all have the gift of healing? Do all interpret? Covet the best gift, but yet, (I show you something better, something better than healing, and something better than miracles, and something better than tongues, something better than these gifts. I show you something better) a more excellent way.”

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Now my friend, without question, in the early days of the church God almighty bestowed upon the apostles and upon other great leaders unusual and powerful gifts. Now turn to **Mark 16:15-17**.

Our Lord is going back to the Father. He is going to ascend back to glory and He's telling His disciples to, "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*" He says: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs (now note that word signs) shall follow them that believe (these signs). In my name shall they cast out devils. In my name they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents. If they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.*"

Now we see this fulfilled in the lives of the apostles. These were not mock signs. This wasn't mind over matter; it wasn't psycho-semantic. They were not showing off in front of people. These were real miracles; these signs were real.

At Pentecost for example; the disciples stood up before the multitude. There were people there from many countries who spoke many different languages. And the apostles stood up and preached the Gospel and the Scripture says: "*Every one of these people heard the Gospel in their own tongue, (in their own language).*" These men spoke with new tongues. That is what Christ said, "*They shall speak with new tongues.*"

And then they shall heal. Peter at the gate called "*Beautiful*" healed a man who was so crippled; he was so gnarled and crippled; he was crippled from his mother's womb; he had never in his life ever taken a step.

He wasn't walking around with a cane. He wasn't walking around with crutches. He wasn't walking around anywhere; he had never walked. He was lame from his mother's womb. And Peter healed him in the name of Jesus Christ.

And then Paul was bitten by a serpent. The Scripture says: "*They shall take up serpents and (they shall not die) they shall not be hurt.*"

Paul put his hand and took some wood and put it on a fire one day and a serpent bit him on the hand. The men all saw it, the heathen, the pagan standing around and they said, "Boy; he'll die in a few minutes." It's probably one of those little coral snakes you know, very small, but very deadly.

But Paul didn't die. He never fell dead and they called him a god. They started listening to him preach then.

And then at Troas Paul was preaching one night. A young man called Eutychus fell out of a second or third floor of a building and died. Paul went down and raised him from the dead.

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And then Peter was able to discern the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. He was able to discern the hypocrisy of Simon Magus. We know without question that our Lord gave to His disciples, His apostles, and these great church leaders, these miracles, these gifts, these signs, and these wonders.

And we know that these miracles were given to the disciples as signs, as credentials. That's what the Scripture teach, proof that they came from God.

Now the New Testament Scripture was not then written. These men were going forth preaching Christ from the Old Testament. They didn't have the Bible like you and I have it today. They were the ones who wrote it.

So, God gave them as they went out with this new message, with this message of the fulfillment of the types, shadows, signs, and so-forth, as they went forth to preach this new message, this Gospel of Christ's substitutionary work; God gave them signs, wonders, gifts, credentials, and proof that they spoke for God.

Let me show you that, **Mark 16:17**, what I read a moment ago. Christ said: *"You go preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. And these signs shall follow thee."*

And over there in **verse 20** it says: *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."* The Lord confirmed His Word, His Gospel with signs and credentials.

Turn with me to **Hebrews 2:4**, now listen to this; *"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."* God bearing these apostles witness, these disciples witness with signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His will.

John the Baptist was down in prison and he sent two men to Christ. He sent two men to our Lord with this question, *"Are you the Christ or do I look for another?"* And our Lord sent these men back to John the Baptist with this message, *"Go tell John how the lame walk, the blind see and the dead are raised, and the Gospel is preached to the poor."* Go back and tell him.

Nicodemus came to our Lord one day and he said, "We know you're come from God. No man can do the miracles you do except God be with him. It's impossible. Man cannot do what you do. God has to be with him and you have to be from God."

And when these disciples went out to an unfriendly world, to a hating world, to a world without a Bible, to a world without Scripture; they went forth declaring God's grace in Christ, God's mercy in Christ.

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And God sent them with credentials that no one could deny. He sent them accompanied by signs that no one could doubt. He sent them with gifts that no one could counterfeit or duplicate. That's right!

You say, "Well preacher; you don't have those things. I don't need them. I can stand up here like I did a moment ago when I made a point and I told you to turn to **Hebrews 2:3-4**. When Peter was preaching he didn't have any **verses 3, and 4**."

I can tell you if I want to talk about giving; I can say, turn to **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**. Peter couldn't tell them to turn to **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**; they had to believe it on his authority, on his word. And God gave him power, miracles, wonders, and signs as credentials.

Now let me show you something; turn to **1 Corinthians 14**. It's talking about tongues or other languages. "*Tongues are for a sign.*" That's what it says here in **1 Corinthians 14:22**. "*Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them who believe not.*"

I've heard people say that speaking in an unknown tongue is a sign you've been baptized with the Holy Ghost. Believers don't need signs. Believers believe the Word of God. Believers don't need a sign.

They said to our Lord, "*Show us a sign.*" He said, "*No sign shall be given but the Scriptures.*" It's unbelievers that need signs, not believers. And **1 Corinthians 14:22** says, "*Tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to them who believe not.*"

All the believer needs is the Word of God, the precious Word of God, the precious blood of Christ, the precious promises of our Lord. That's all he needs. Just read it to him out of the Word.

You don't have to prove the existence of God to him; God lives in his heart. You don't have to prove that he needs a Saviour; He lives with his conscience. You don't have to prove to him Christ is his only hope. He knows Christ is his only hope.

He's built on that foundation and called upon that name and rested in that blood. You don't have to prove to him that God loves him; "*God's love is shed abroad in his heart.*" That's right!

Now these signs did not continue after the Scriptures were complete. If you'll take the time to read church history; go all the way back. We have recorded messages all the way back to Barnabas who was the sidekick of the apostle Paul.

And back through church history we do not find, not one example of these so-called signs and wonders and credentials, not in the ministry of Martin Luther, nor John Calvin, nor Jerome Zanchius nor in the ministry of John Bunyan, or John Owen, or George Whitfield, or even John Wesley, or even Charles Spurgeon, none of these men.

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If you want to go back and pick up what we call the charismatic movement and the speaking in tongues and the divine healing campaign; you can go back less than a hundred years ago. And that's when that started, trying to revive this sort of thing in the church.

If God had permitted these miracles and wonders to continue from the apostles till this day; (now listen to me) if He had permitted these miracles, these gifts to remain in the church as they were in the hands of Paul, Peter, James, John, and these other men; they would have attracted the attention and the notice of men away from the Word of God, away from Christ, away from the Gospel as they do right now.

If you go to a healing campaign today; the emphasis is not in sin and salvation. The emphasis is not in the need of the sinner and his relationship with Christ. The emphasis is not in the sinner escaping the wrath of God and coming to believe on Christ and trusting Him and loving Him; the emphasis is on this flesh, this human body.

We're straightening out a crooked leg instead of straightening out a crooked heart, giving sight to a blind man, a physically blind man, instead of getting sight, a spiritual light into the darkness of those who are in spiritual darkness.

The emphasis is unstopping these human ears and these natural ears. The emphasis is not in giving the Word of God to the heart and the hearing of a man who has never heard it. It's loving these bodies and making them healthy and wealthy instead of loving our souls and making them healthy and wealthy in Christ Jesus.

Read it in **John chapter 2:23**. Our Lord was at Jerusalem in that great Feast Day and it says, *"Many believed on Him; many believed on Him when they saw the miracles which He did."*

It fascinated them. It astounded them. Yes sir; it got their interest. When they saw the miracles which He did they believed on Him. But watch this next line in **John 2:24**; *"But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because He knew all men."*

One time our Lord was walking along followed by a great multitude of people and He turned and said to them; *"I know why you are following me. You're following me because of the loaves and fishes. You did eat and you were filled."*

"My kingdom is not meat and drink, my kingdom is not of this world, my kingdom is not of the flesh; my kingdom is to do the will of Him that sent me."

And all they were interested in is the wealth and health of the body and the healing of the body and the straightening of crooked limbs. They were completely, totally, taken away from what the kingdom of God really is. It is in the heart of the sinner.

And when men and women today emphasize tongues and miracles and healings they usually depart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They give their attention to fleshly wonders and not to spiritual miracles and spiritual regeneration.

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Do you know what this is? I'm going to be blunt with you. This is satanic! It's Satan taking your hearts away from the simplicity of Christ. It's Satan; that's exactly what he's doing. He's turning your attention away from Christ and away from the Gospel.

Now my friend; listen to this, Moses saw more miracles in one day than today's so-called divine healers see in a lifetime. Moses saw the dividing of the sea and the Israelites go through on dry land and Pharaoh's army come through there and drown.

Moses saw the death of the firstborn. He saw the river turn to blood. He saw the bush that burned and was not consumed. He saw the hail and all of these different plagues. He saw the smiting of the rock and the water gushing forth. He saw the manna come down from heaven and he saw all of these things.

But yet, you hear him in **Exodus chapter 33** as he gets alone with God in that intense meeting and he prays: *"O God; show me thy glory, show me thy glory."*

Moses knew that the glory of God is not in fleshly miracles, the glory of God is not in fleshly wonders, and the glory of God is not in these outstanding, attention-getting miracles. God said to him, the glory of God is His sovereign grace and His mercy.

The Lord said to Moses, *"I'll cause my goodness to pass before you. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."* That is God's glory.

God never intended that the battle between truth and error be fought by miracles and wonders on a field of flesh. God is not vying with Satan over your flesh for your attention. Now that's right!

God almighty does not fight the battle between truth and error on a field of flesh but the battle for truth and error is fought using the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of men and women. That's where it goes on.

Some of God's greatest men are men who have known great affliction of body. Some of God's greatest men have been men who have lived. David Brainerd, that great missionary of the Indians died when he was 29 years of age; the last four or five years of his life was so sick with TB. He died in the home of Johnathan Edwards.

Some of these greatest soldiers of the cross, Charles Spurgeon spent as much as three or four months a year out of his pulpit because his body was so frail, and he died when he was 58 years of age. Afflictions are part of the trials that God sends in our lives to make us more like Christ.

Now listen over here in **2 Corinthians chapter 10:3**: *"We do not war after the flesh. Our weapons are not carnal but they're mighty through God bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*

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“It’s not by might, not by power, (not by miracles, signs or wonders) it’s by my spirit saith the Lord.”

And I wish I could take your attention away from this old natural body and turn your attention to Calvary’s cross. I wish I could take your attention away from sickness, disease, bills, bankruptcy, and all of these things that provide for the flesh and turn your attention on your sins, your need, your guilt, the grace of God, and the mercy of God through Christ.

Let me give you an illustration: When a young tree is first planted, just a frail sapling; it is frail and it is weak. And therefore, that young tree needs a strong stake driven right up beside it. Here’s the young sapling and here’s the stake right beside it. But that’s to support the little, young, tree.

But when that tree is full grown and when that tree is strong it doesn’t need that stake. It doesn’t need that support. So, it is with the church. At first it was feeble and frail and small, just a handful here and a handful there.

It needed to be sustained. It needed to be supported. It needed proof, it needed signs, it needed credentials, and it was supported by these things. But it doesn’t need it anymore. It has the Word of God and that’s sufficient. *“And if they speak not according to the Word of God it’s because there’s no light in them.”*

Now I want you to listen to this, do gifts remain in the church today? I’d be reluctant to say. The Lord is sovereign and *“He gives gifts severally as He will.”* If He’s pleased to bring these marvelous miracles back in a day of great revival, that’s God’s business.

But I’ll tell you this, we’re told to pray for the sick. Read the book of **James chapter 5**. *“Is any sick among you? Let him send for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”* We do that. That is Scriptural.

If he has sins, that’ll be forgiven and he’ll be healed. We are to pray I believe for, not only for the gift of healing in that regard but we need to pray for the gift of knowledge, *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.”*

And faithful missionaries who go to other countries must preach the Gospel in other languages. And God gives them the power to learn it and the gift to learn it. That’s the gift of God to be able to preach the Gospel, not in an unknown gibberish that nobody can understand.

I’d rather say five words in a language you can understand than five million words in a language nobody can understand, not even me.

I believe we’re to seek the gift of preaching. Oh, to be able to preach like Whitfield in the power of God’s Spirit. That’s a gift. Oh, to be able to pray like George Mueller who fed thousands and

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thousands and thousands of orphans without soliciting one dime like people solicit over radio and television today.

He just made his need known to God and God met that need. We've become solicitors. We've become hucksters. We've come to the place where more time is spent begging for money than preaching the Gospel.

If you have the power of prayer you don't need to beg. God will supply your need. Oh, to be able to sing in the Spirit like the sweet Psalmist David. We need the gift of wisdom. "*Covet the best gifts;*" that's what Paul said. "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation (or change).*"

Now wait a minute, Paul said, I will show you something better. I will show you a more excellent way. Look at **1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 1**; "*Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels and have not love I'm a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.*"

What's he saying? Read that verse again. Here's what he's saying, what if I could speak in another language? What if I could speak in the languages of all men? What if I could even speak in the celestial tongues of the angels? "*If I have not love, (love for Christ, love for the brethren, and love for all men) I'm nothing but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal (a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal).*"

That's something better than gifts, His love. That's what he's saying. "*You covet the best gifts.*" You covet knowledge and prayer, faith and wisdom, and all these gifts of God.

But I'll tell you something better, he said, something a lot better than that. In fact, you may have the gift so you can speak in other languages and even like an angel, but if you don't have love; somebody might as well hit a Chinese gong for all the good it would do.

Listen to the next verse: "*Though I have the gift of prophecy,*" prophetic powers, to be able to tell whether Russia will fight Israel or whether the United States will fight Russia."

What if I have these prophetic gifts and I can foretell the future and I can preach with great words and I can understand prophecies and mysteries and have unusual faith that moves mountains, and have not love, and have not love, I'm nothing. That's what I am. I'm a prophetic nothing. That's what I am without love, this is something better!

And I'll tell you this; look at the next verse; he says: "*Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, (though I give all my money to religious causes and all my possessions, though I even die as a martyr at a burning stake) and have not the love of Christ (all of these works of charity) it will profit me nothing.*"

What is better than tongues, better than miracles, better than signs, better than knowledge, better than wisdom, better than prophecy? What is it? It is love; love is essential. "*If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed.*"

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That's what the Scripture says. *"He that loveth not knoweth not God; God is love. We know that we've passed from death unto life."* How do we know, because we can speak with tongues? Satan can do that.

Because we can do great wonders; Satan can do great wonders. *"We know we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."*

We love Him who's our Saviour the Lord, our substitute and Redeemer. We love His Word, His Gospel, and His church. We love His people. And we love men of all races and nationalities for His sake. You read of **1 Corinthians chapter 13** it is all about love.

Paul in **1 Corinthians chapter 12** tells about gifts; they were there. I'm not denying that at all. Without question they were there.

God used them for signs and miracles and wonders. But according to His sovereign will He lifted them when His Word was finished and when His Scriptures were complete because we don't need signs and miracles and credentials. We have God's Word.

And all through church history you don't find any man who preached the Gospel of Christ who had in his ministry anywhere any of these things.

Now there are gifts in the church. Wisdom is a gift, faith is a gift, prayer is a gift, healing is a gift, and all of these things. The ability to preach the Gospel in another language is a gift, but they're not gifts to play with. They're not gifts to show off. And they're not gifts to play church with.

They're sovereignly given and supernaturally given and given by the Holy Spirit *"severally as He will."*

Paul said, "I'll show you something better than gifts. Now you covet the best gifts, but I'll show you something better. I may have all these gifts and have not love, I'm a noisy gong and a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I'm nothing and it profiteth me nothing."

What kind of love is this? Well; its love that suffers long and is patient, patient under the afflicting hand of God, patient under the reproaches and neglect of men, slow to anger, not hasty to revenge, and eager to forgive.

"Love is kind. Love envieth not." It doesn't envy either the material or spiritual prosperity of others. It is not proud nor boastful. It is not arrogant nor rude. It does not insist on having its own rights and way. It does not remember evil but dwells on good. Love rejoices not in evil, in gossip, in the fall of others, but in the good and truth. *"Love beareth all things, believeth all things, and hopeth all things. Love never fails."*

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Why is it essential? Why is it more excellent than gifts? Because a man can have gifts and have not life. Satan has gifts, strange and powerful gifts, but he doesn't have love. Gifts are temporary, and love is forever. Gifts are in part. Love is in Christ!