

Do Miracles Still Occur Today?

A Biblical Study

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Introduction

Few subjects generate more discussion among sincere Christians than miracles. Some believe miraculous gifts continue today exactly as they did during the first century. Others believe the Bible teaches that miraculous gifts served a temporary purpose and ceased once God's revelation was complete.

Rather than relying on feelings, traditions, or personal experiences, we must ask one question:

What do the Scriptures teach?

What Is a Miracle?

A miracle is an event in which God temporarily suspends or overrides the normal laws of nature to accomplish His divine purpose.

Examples include:

- Jesus calming the sea (Mark 4:39)
- Raising Lazarus (John 11)
- Healing the lame (Acts 3)
- Raising the dead (Acts 9:36-42)

Miracles were not merely unusual events. They were undeniable demonstrations of God's power.

Why Did God Give Miracles?

The Bible gives several reasons.

1. To Confirm God's Messengers

"The signs of a true apostle were performed among you..."
2 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)

Miracles authenticated those speaking for God.

2. To Confirm the Gospel

"The Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs."

Mark 16:20

Miracles proved that the Gospel originated with God.

3. To Reveal New Truth

Before the New Testament was completed, Christians did not possess the entire written revelation.

Paul wrote:

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

1 Corinthians 12:7

The miraculous gifts supplied revelation until Scripture was completed.

Could Everyone Perform Miracles?

No.

Even during the first century:

- Not every Christian possessed miraculous gifts.
- Gifts were distributed according to God's will.
- Different Christians received different gifts.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

How Were Miraculous Gifts Received?

Generally, miraculous gifts were imparted through the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Examples:

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Acts 8:14-19

The Samaritans had been baptized, but miraculous gifts came only after Peter and John laid hands on them.

Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the apostles' hands.

Acts 19:6

Paul laid hands on certain disciples, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Did Miraculous Gifts Continue Forever?

The Bible says they would cease.

"Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease..."

1 Corinthians 13:8

Paul explains that miraculous gifts belonged to a temporary period.

What Is "The Perfect"?

Paul continues:

"When the perfect comes, the partial will pass away."

1 Corinthians 13:10

Many understand "the perfect" to refer to the completed revelation of God—the completed New Testament.

The miraculous gifts were partial.

Scripture became complete.

When the complete revelation came, the temporary gifts fulfilled their purpose.

Could Miraculous Gifts Continue After the Apostles Died?

The Bible never records anyone passing miraculous gifts apart from the apostles.

When the apostles died:

- no one remained to impart miraculous gifts.
- those who already possessed gifts eventually died.

The gifts naturally ceased.

Does God Still Work Today?

Absolutely!

God answers prayers.

James writes:

"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

James 5:16

God providentially works in our lives every day.

However, providence is different from miraculous gifts.

God may heal.

God may open doors.

God may protect His people.

But those are not the same as possessing miraculous powers like Peter or Paul.

Modern Miracle Claims

Many today claim to:

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- heal instantly
- raise the dead
- speak in tongues
- receive direct revelation

Yet these claims differ dramatically from New Testament miracles.

Biblical miracles were:

- immediate
- complete
- undeniable
- public
- never failed

Modern claims are often:

- difficult to verify
- incomplete
- inconsistent
- dependent upon emotion or expectation

Our Faith Does Not Depend Upon Modern Miracles

Jesus said:

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:29

Our faith rests upon:

- the historical resurrection of Christ
- the testimony of inspired witnesses
- the completed Word of God

What We Have Today Is Better

Peter wrote:

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"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness..."

2 Peter 1:3

Paul declared:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God... that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

We possess everything necessary for salvation and faithful Christian living.

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that miracles served a divine purpose:

- confirming God's messengers,
- revealing His truth,
- establishing the church,
- and confirming the Gospel.

Once that work was accomplished and God's revelation was complete, miraculous gifts fulfilled their purpose and ceased.

This does **not** mean God has stopped working.

God still rules.

God still answers prayer.

God still providentially cares for His people.

But Christians today walk by faith in God's revealed Word rather than by miraculous signs.

Key Scriptures

- Mark 16:20
- John 20:29
- Acts 2
- Acts 8:14-19
- Acts 19:6

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- 1 Corinthians 12
- 1 Corinthians 13:8-13
- 2 Corinthians 12:12
- James 5:16
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- 2 Peter 1:3

Reflection Questions

1. What primary purpose did miracles serve in the New Testament?
2. How were miraculous gifts normally imparted?
3. What does 1 Corinthians 13 teach about miraculous gifts?
4. How is God's providence different from miraculous gifts?
5. Why is the completed Word of God sufficient for Christians today?

Addendum

What is meant by “the perfect in 1 Corinthians 13? It's important to note that **1 Corinthians 13 never explicitly says "the perfect" is the completed New Testament.** That conclusion is an inference based on the broader context. Let's examine the evidence.

The Text

"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will be done away; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will be done away... But when **the perfect** comes, the partial will be done away." (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)

The Greek word translated "perfect" is **τὸ τέλειον** (*to teleion*), meaning "the complete," "the mature," or "that which has reached its end or goal."

The question is: **What is "the complete"?**

The argument that "the perfect" is the completed revelation

Those who hold this view generally argue as follows.

1. Paul contrasts "partial" with "complete."

Notice the contrast:

- Partial prophecy
- Partial knowledge

versus

- The complete

In chapters 12–14, Paul is discussing **miraculous spiritual gifts**, especially prophecy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge.

Therefore, they argue that "the complete" refers to the completion of the means by which God revealed His truth. Once God's revelation was complete, the partial methods were no longer needed.

2. Miraculous gifts were for revelation

Throughout the New Testament, miraculous gifts often conveyed God's revelation.

Examples include:

- prophecy
- miraculous knowledge
- tongues interpreted

Once Scripture was completed, Christians possessed God's complete revelation.

This fits passages like:

"All Scripture... equips the man of God for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16–17

and

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness."

2 Peter 1:3

If believers have **all things** necessary through the revealed word, there is no continuing need for revelatory gifts.

3. The illustration of childhood

Paul continues:

"When I was a child... when I became a man, I put away childish things."

The argument is:

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- miraculous gifts belonged to the church's infancy.
- completed revelation marked its maturity.

The emphasis is moving from an incomplete stage to a complete one.

4. The apostles disappear

Acts shows miraculous gifts being imparted through the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14–19; Acts 19:6).

Once the apostles died, and those who had received gifts from them died, no biblical mechanism remained for transmitting miraculous gifts.

This historical reality harmonizes with the idea that the gifts were temporary.

The strongest objection

Usually point to verse 12:

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

They argue:

- "face to face" sounds like seeing Christ.
- complete knowledge sounds like heaven.
- therefore "the perfect" must refer to Christ's return.

This is probably the strongest argument against identifying "the perfect" with the completed Scriptures.

How to answer that objection

Several responses are commonly given.

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"Face to face" is not always literal.

The expression often refers to clear communication rather than physically seeing someone.

For example:

"The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face." (Exodus 33:11)

Yet Moses did not literally behold God's full glory (Exodus 33:20).

"Know fully" is relative.

Paul does not say believers become omniscient.

Rather, the contrast is between:

- partial revelation
- complete revelation

Just as a completed puzzle provides a fuller picture than a few pieces, the completed revelation provides a fuller understanding than isolated prophetic messages.

The context is gifts.

Chapters 12–14 concern miraculous gifts, not the Second Coming.

Therefore, many argue the most natural interpretation keeps "the perfect" within that subject.

What many scholars believe today

Many evangelical scholars—including those who believe miraculous gifts continue—interpret "the perfect" as referring to:

- Christ's return,
- the eternal state,
- or the consummation of God's kingdom.

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On the other hand, many within churches of Christ understand it as referring to the completion of God's revelation and the passing away of revelatory gifts.

Both positions seek to take the text seriously, but they weigh the context differently.

My assessment

The text itself does not explicitly identify it that way.

However:

Many faithful students of Scripture, particularly within churches of Christ, understand 'the perfect' to refer to the completed revelation of God. This rests on the immediate context of spiritual gifts, the temporary purpose of revelatory gifts, and passages that describe Scripture as fully equipping the Christian (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3).