

SOMETHING BETTER THAN MIRACLES

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28-31 • TV-237B

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by

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1 Corinthians 12:28-31

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 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.”

It won't be anything new for this telecast, but I am going to bring what I would call a controversial message. I am going to speak to you on this subject: **“SOMETHING BETTER THAN MIRACLES.”**

When I am talking about miracles, I am talking about tongues, healings, discernment of spirits, prophecies, and these various gifts, mentioned in **1 Corinthians 12.**

I have chosen as my text, **1 Corinthians Chapter 12: verses 30 and 31.** I want you to listen to it; it says; *“Are all apostles, are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles and have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”*

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“But covet earnestly; desire the best gifts” (the gifts of the Holy Spirit). Then Paul says, *“And yet, I show you a more excellent way* (I show you something better than miracles).”

Do you see what he is saying? *“Covet the best gifts, and yet;”* I show you something better, something more excellent, and something better than miracles.

Without a question, in the early days of the church, God bestowed upon the disciples, upon the apostles and other leaders, great, powerful, and unusual gifts.

When our Lord sent His disciples out in **Mark 16** to preach, He said to them; *“Go and preach the Gospel to every creature; these signs shall follow them that believe.”*

He said, *“They will drink deadly things and it won’t hurt them. They will run into poison snakes and they won’t hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick and they will be recovered. The blind will see and the dead will live.”*

At Pentecost the disciples preached the Gospel of Christ in many languages. There were people there from all of these different countries. They heard these men preach the Gospel in a language that these men had never learned. They spoke in tongues at Pentecost.

At the gate “Beautiful,” Peter healed a man and made him completely well at the snap of his finger. This man had been born lame from birth.

At Troas, Paul raised a man from the dead. Paul laid his hands on him (this man who was dead) and he lived.

Peter was able to discern the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. These people stood before him lying to God, lying to the Holy Ghost. Peter, God’s preacher, knew that they were lying. He told them that they were; he knew their thoughts.

Peter was also able to discern the hypocrisy of Simon Magus. He told him; *“Your heart is not right with God.”* Peter couldn’t see his heart could he? This is what he says; *“Your heart is not right with God.”*

This is without question; these signs followed these apostles and early preachers; yes they did. There were gifts, wonders, miracles, and powerful things.

Secondly, without question; these gifts, signs, miracles and wonders, were given to these apostles for a reason. God had a reason and a divine purpose.

These signs, wonders, and miracles along with the ability to perform them and speak other languages, were given to these apostles and early preachers as credentials, as proof, that they were sent from God. These were given as proof that they spoke for God.

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These men came and said they were speaking for God. These signs, miracles, and wonders, were credentials or proof to the people that they were speaking for God. Even our Lord Jesus Christ used it as a proof. He said, *“If you don’t believe me; believe me for the works sake, the miracles that I do.”*

Nicodemus said to Christ; *“We know that you are a teacher come from God. No man could do the miracles you do except God be with Him.”* Isn’t this what he said? We know this to be true.

In **Hebrews 2: 3- 4**, *“The Gospel at the first, began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.”* Who were those people? Those people were the apostles.

“God also bearing these men witness with signs, wonders, different miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His will.” Our Lord preached the Gospel and it was confirmed by those that heard it. They preached it to us and *“God bore them witness.”*

God gave them credentials and God gave them proof that they spoke the truth and that they spoke for God by the different miracles and wonders, signs, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Why? What was this divine reason and purpose? The only Scriptures that those people had back then were the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament was not written. That is all they had, the Old Testament Scriptures, from Genesis to Malachi. That was the only Bible that they had.

These disciples came preaching the fulfillment of the Old Testament, the fulfillment of all the prophecies, all the ceremonies, all the sacrifices and types that I preached about last week. They came preaching the fulfillment of those things in Christ.

It was necessary, then, that they have some proof that God sent them to declare this message, that God sent them to declare this good Word, this good news and these glad tidings. It was necessary that they have some proof that this Gospel was our liberty in Christ Jesus.

This Gospel was a Covenant of Grace, not of works. This Gospel was a finished work. They needed proof and they needed credentials. They needed it but I don’t need it because the New Testament is completed.

Here is another reason why they needed credentials, gifts, wonders, and signs, which we don’t need. These men were going to the Gentiles, the heathen and the pagans, which were not Jews but Gentiles. They were going to the heathen to preach Christ and to preach the fulfillment of God’s promise and prophecies.

The heathen, the Gentiles, had no Scripture at all. They had no knowledge of the Scriptures and they had no knowledge of the law. They had no prophet, priest, or tabernacle.

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These men were going to Ephesus, Galatia, and other places to preach Christ. They needed proof and credentials. The people needed also to be convinced that these apostles and preachers were not imposters but men of God who literally, in reality, were men of God.

Why don't I need these miracles, wonders, and signs? I have the whole Bible. The Gentile world has the whole Bible. The Bible has been printed in over a thousand different languages all over the world.

God doesn't have to prove anything. We don't need divine proof. We don't need signs, wonders or miracles to show us that God reigns and that He will redeem sinners through the blood of Jesus Christ. You can read this yourself in the Bible.

However, my friend; the Scriptures (when they were completed, when the New Testament was written) have a history of the church after the days of the apostles.

We have the writings of men like Ignatius and Augustine, who lived in back in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth century. They lived all the way up to this present day.

I'm going to tell you something; I know a little about church history. I know that these unusual gifts of speaking in other languages, the discernment of the spirits and prophecies, other than the Word of God, are not mentioned by proven servants of God in the past.

Augustine never talked about it and never had them. John Calvin never had them. Martin Luther never had them. John Owen never had them. Huss never had them and neither did Whitfield, Charles Wesley, or Isaac Watts, John Newton, Zwingli, Spurgeon, Gill or Edwards.

You can keep naming these men of power, these men of proven ability, and these theological giants. These men wrote the Confessions of Faith that we have, the Heidelberg, the West Minister, the Philadelphia and all of these great confessions of faith. There are also the 39 articles of the Episcopal Church.

These men knew nothing about this sort of thing nor did they talk about it. They never referred to it in their lives or in their churches. It is only in recent days and I am telling you the truth.

It's only in these recent days in the days of all of these cults, sects, and all the other off-shoots of church splits that men have claimed to have the ability to speak in an unknown tongue and to discern thoughts and situations.

I will tell you this and listen to me; "Most of these men who claim to have the gift of tongues and major on those gifts, rarely, ever, preach Christ." They call it "unknown tongue" because neither they nor anyone else knows what they are saying.

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These men who claim to have these superb, unusual, supernatural gifts (to heal the sick or to speak in other languages or to discern the spirit) major on those gifts and rarely, ever, preach Christ. They preach the Holy Ghost and they preach the gifts.

They are always having healing services but they rarely, ever, tell sinners how God can be just and justify the ungodly. They rarely, ever preach Christ.

They don't preach what Calvin, Luther, Whitfield, Zwingli, Huss, Owen, Edwards, Gill, and Spurgeon, Watson, Newton, preached. They don't preach what those men preached because they don't have their message.

There is one thing that is very noticeable in this day and I want you to listen to me. Where men and women, preachers, and congregations claim these so-called gifts of the spirit, the preachers and the people are more taken up with and concerned with the gifts than they are with the Gospel.

That's a fact and you know it! They are more concerned with the tongues, "the hoop-lah" and the healing of the body than they are the healing of the soul. They are more concerned with the gifts than they are of the Gospel of God's grace.

Our Lord experienced that when He was right here on this earth. It says in **John 2**; "*When they saw the miracles.*" It wasn't when they heard His message or heard His Gospel but "*when they saw the miracles many believed on Him.*"

He did not commit Himself to them; He did not; He knew their heart. He knew that they were miracle followers. He knew that they were miracle tasters. He knew that they were people who liked emotionalism.

Also; He said to another group, "*I know why you are following me; you ate of the loaves and were filled; labor not for the meat that perisheth.*"

A man's life does not consist in the things he owns and the clothes he wears and the food he eats. A man's life is righteousness and peace with God. That is exactly right!

It's not the purpose my friend, of the Holy Ghost to call attention to Himself or to the gifts of the spirit. That is not why the Holy Spirit was given. The Holy Spirit was not given by Christ to call attention to "play-pretties," gifts, and to Himself.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Christ to the hearts of men in saving faith. Listen to our Lord in **John 16:13**; "*When He, the Holy Spirit is come, He will guide you into all truth for He shall not speak of Himself. When He the spirit of truth is come, (not an evil spirit or an idle spirit or another spirit but the Holy Spirit of truth is come); He will guide you into all truth for He shall not speak of Himself.*"

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Isn't it unusual that everywhere, preachers claim to have the gifts and the baptism of the Holy Ghost along with these unusual miracles? All they talk about is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost. They will say, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?"

They will lay their hands on you and say that you have the Holy Ghost. They don't preach Christ. Our Lord said, "*When the Holy Ghost is come, He won't speak of Himself.*" He will not speak of Himself. What will He do? "*He shall glorify me.*" He shall speak of Christ.

You know, the man who has the Holy Spirit is the man who preaches Christ. Our Lord said, "*He, the Holy Spirit, shall receive of mine and show it to you.*" Receive what of mine? I'm talking about His righteousness, His sanctification, His atonement, His justification and His redemption.

Those are the things of Christ. Those are the things that I need. I may have poor eyesight and still go to glory. I may be hard of hearing, but my soul will still be saved. I may be lame or crippled but I can be right with God. It is my heart that needs a work of grace, not my body.

I don't need money, finances, clothes, popularity or health; I need Christ. I need my sins forgiven. I need my name written in the Book of Life. Our Lord said to His disciples; "*Don't rejoice that the devils are subject unto you.*" That is nothing to rejoice about, "*rejoice that your name is written in the Book of Life.*"

Sinners are not saved by seeing miracles; they are saved by hearing the Word of God. Listen to **Romans 10:17**; "*Faith cometh by hearing.*" How does faith come, preacher? The Scripture says, "*Faith cometh by hearing?*"

Faith doesn't come by watching some preacher throw a crutch across a building or by throwing a wheelchair down an aisle or seeing some person get up and walk and then get back into a wheelchair when they get home.

Faith doesn't come by claiming to be healed of cancer and then die when they refuse to take medicine or go to the doctor; "*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" Faith cometh by hearing, not by miracles, signs, and wonders, done by imposters; it comes by hearing the Word of God.

The rich man in hell said this; "*Father Abraham, send Lazarus back to earth and let him warn my brothers that they come not to this place.*" Abraham said, "*They have the Scriptures; they have Moses and the prophets*" which is the Scriptures.

He said, "*No; they won't listen to the Scriptures. If one rose from the dead they would believe.*" Do you know what Abraham said to him? He said, "*If they hear not the Word of God, they will not believe though one rose from the dead.*" Did you know that; "*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God?*"

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You see, the foundation of faith is not an experience; it is not a miracle, or an emotional experience, but it is the Word of God. I believe because God has said it.

Let me tell you something else friend; you listen to me and read the **2nd Chapter of Acts**. The tongue spoken in the Scriptures were known languages. Peter and the apostles spoke in other languages. They did not speak in gibberish or in an unknown tongue.

The Scripture plainly says; *“Everyone there heard the Gospel in his own tongue, (in his own language).”* The Gospel was preached. They just didn’t get up there and demonstrate what power they had, what ability they had and how they could discern the spirits.

They didn’t entertain sinners on the road to hell; they preached Christ. They preached it in a language that was supernaturally given to them by the Spirit of God. Every man heard the Gospel in his own tongue. There were Greeks and other people of other nations, the so-called unknown tongues.

The gibberish spoken today is phony. I know what I’m saying; this so-called unknown tongue is a tongue that no one understands, even the person who is giving it, which he says is his spirit praying anyway, is not his understanding.

I will tell you this, when a man speaks in a language that God gives him, the people to whom he speaks will understand it. He may not understand it but someone will. This gibberish that is spoken today is as phony as the people who speak it.

That’s exactly right; they don’t understand it and no one else does because it is *“another spirit.”* It accomplishes nothing whatsoever and it serves no purpose.

Now you listen again; grab a hold of your chair there and you listen to me; I am telling you the truth. I hear people say this; *“To speak in an unknown tongue is a sign to believers that they have been baptized by the Holy Ghost.”* They say that they have the gift of tongues.

Listen to **1 Corinthians 14:22**; *“Wherefore tongues are for a sign.”* That’s exactly right; they are for a sign, *“not to them who believe.”* What did I say? Read it yourself; *“Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe but to them that believe not.”*

Yes, tongues in the New Testament were a sign. They were proof or credentials to show people that God was speaking. To what people was this shown? It was shown to unbelievers. The believer doesn’t need any signs.

“This sinful and adulteress generation seeketh a sign and no sign will be given.” Our Lord said, *“No sign will be given.”* That is exactly right; signs are for unbelievers. Believers do not need signs, *“they walk by faith not by sight.”*

God doesn’t have to prove anything to a believer. Job said, *“Though He slay me; I will trust Him.”* He does not have to prove anything.

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I'm not questioning God's power to do anything; all life is of God. God creates and gives life. All healing is of God. Even death is of God. God decrees death, read **Job 14**.

I'm not questioning God's power to give men unusual gifts when it serves a divine purpose to glorify His name, to convert sinners, and to bring men to Christ, to know the Saviour. I'm not questioning His power or right to give supernatural gifts for that divine purpose to exalt Christ.

I'm not questioning God's power to heal the body through prayer; this is in **James Chapter 5**. The Scripture tells us to "*pray for the sick, to anoint them with oil.*" I do that, I pray for the sick, I'll anoint men and women with oil and pray that the Holy Spirit will be pleased to heal them.

What I am questioning is this; please listen to me; I am questioning and I am denying the false preachers, hucksters, and merchandisers of men in this day, in the United States of America, who get rich and deceive people.

These false preachers deceive people with their phony healing services and their phony prayer cloths and their rich organizations.

I will tell you this; if they want to heal people, the hospitals are full of people that need healing. The rest homes are full of people that need healing.

They don't have to put on a great tent campaign that costs thousands of dollars. They don't need to rent a great auditorium that costs thousands of dollars and bring people in wheelchairs and bring them to an auditorium so they can pass the collection plate. They do this thinking that their bills will be paid and that they will be driving big cars and living in fine homes.

They don't need to do that. If they want to heal people, the sick people, go to the hospital. Every one of them is full of sick people.

Do like the apostles did by the roadside. Walk down the street and lay hands on a man at the gate. Don't call a bunch of people together so you can promote a program and get rich.

The apostle Paul tells the early church; "*Covet the best gifts.*" What are these best gifts? The best gifts are the power of faith and the gift of faith. The Scripture says, "*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.*"

Covet the power to preach the Gospel. The man who preaches the Gospel of Christ and God uses to deliver souls from hell and men from the bondage and slavery of sin and the law is a good gift.

There is the gift of knowledge; "*O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.*"

Covet the gift of prayer, humility, graciousness, forgiveness, generosity and the power to help and give to others. "*Covet the best gifts.*"

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I'm telling you this; in all of these gifts, miracles and power, Paul says; *"I'm going to show you something better than miracles and better than gifts; I'm going to show you the love of Christ."*

Listen to **1 Corinthians 13**; *"Though I speak with the tongues (the languages) of men and angels, and I don't have love (Christ), I am like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."* This would be something wouldn't it, to speak in all the languages of angels and men. God is love. *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."*

You might as well hit a big, old, Chinese gong for all the good that it would do. You would just be rattling off in your own gibberish and unknown tongue. It doesn't mean a thing if you do not have the love of Christ in your soul and in your heart by the grace of God. That's right; don't be proud and lifted up.

I might have the gift of prophecy. I might understand the mysteries and be able to take people deep into the great mysteries of history in the Word. I may have great knowledge and faith *"so that I can remove mountains."*

If I have not love, the love of Christ, the love of God in my heart, if I have not Christ, His saving mercies then *"I am nothing."*

Do you mean that I am nothing with all my power, prestige, influence, prophetic powers, knowledge and intellect? Without Christ *"I am nothing."* I am a big, fat, zero; I am nothing.

"Though I bestow my goods to feed the poor, and have not the love of Christ" it won't profit me one thing. I'm for that; I'm for feeding the poor. Send money to Nigeria, Ethiopia or anywhere. Send wheat to Russia, help the Chinese. Help anyone.

Feed the poor, help the hungry. Supply the needy. Give my body to be burned as a martyr for my beliefs and theology. If I do that and have not the love of Christ it won't profit me one thing.

Everything starts with heart knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It continues to walk with the heart knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is consummated with the heart knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is this love? This love is love for Christ, love for the people of God, and love for people everywhere.

Let me show you the definition of this love:

Paul writes in **verse 4**, *"Love endures."* This love endures and is not temporary. This love is kind, gentle, and courteous. This love is not envious and jealous. This love is not proud and boastful of what I have, what I know, or what I have done. This love is never rude or discourteous.

This love does not insist on its own rights. This love is not touchy and easily provoked. This love does not imagine evil; read between the lines.

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This love does not rejoice in another person's fall but this love *"beareth all things, believeth all things; hopeth all things, endureth all things and it never fails."* This love never quits loving.

I wish that all the folks out there who profess to be saved, who profess to be believers, would quit seeking the so-called gifts and seek this love.

I will show you something better and I will show you something more excellent than they; *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and do not have love; I am a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."*

This is right; *"Covet the best gifts."*

I'll show you something better; ask God to shed His love abroad in your heart, to reveal to you the love of Christ and make you love like Christ.