

## "Miracles, Mystery, and the Ministry of the Spirit" (Pt. 1)

**The Ministry of the Spirit**

April 12, 2026

**INTRO ... "The Great Miracles Debate" - "Does God Still Do Miracles?"**

### **?? - Have You Ever Seen or Experienced a Miracle, Firsthand?**

"How is the Holy Spirit working in churches today? Is he really giving miraculous healings and prophecies and messages in tongues? Is he giving Christians new power for ministry when they experience a "baptism in the Holy Spirit" after conversion? Is he driving out demons when Christians command them to flee?

Or are these events confined to the distant past, to the time when the New Testament was being written and living apostles taught and governed-and worked miracles-in the churches? ...Can people have a gift of prophecy today, so that God actually reveals things to them and they can tell these revelations to others? Or was that gift confined to the time when the New Testament was still unfinished, in the first century A.D.? And what about healing? Should Christians expect that God will often heal in miraculous ways when they pray today? Can some people still have a gift of healing? Or should our prayer emphasis be that God will work to heal through ordinary means, such as doctors and medicine? Or again, should we mostly encourage people to see the sanctifying value of sickness and pray that they will have grace to endure it?" **Wayne Grudem**, "Counterpoints: Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?"

"A common way of dividing the gifts of the Spirit is into miraculous and nonmiraculous gifts. Among the nonmiraculous gifts are the gift of teaching, of ruling, of giving, and of showing mercy. Among the miraculous gifts are 'gifts of healing', 'workings of miracles', 'speaking in different kinds of tongues'. ...There has been and continues to be considerable difference of opinion among Christians on the question of whether the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are still present in the church today. ...Christian theologians all agree that the nonmiraculous gifts of the Spirit are still with us today. Some theologians and Bible scholars say that the miraculous gifts are still in the church today, whereas others question this." **Anthony Hoekema**, "Saved by Grace", p. 32

### **WARNING: These "Constructed Categories are NOT Biblically Constructed, They are Humanly Reasoned"**

- There is NO "classification" of "miraculous or nonmiraculous gifts" in the Bible
- There is NO "Temporary Category" doctrine (pertaining to the Holy Spirit) in the Bible
- There is NO "Anticipated Day of the Bible" that alters God's plan away from the Holy Spirit
- We must be prepared to explain "variations" in God's Manifest Presence on Earth in some other ways, than by these "Reasoned Constructions" (because there certainly are ebbs, flows, and variations in the intensity levels of God's Manifest Presence)

**?? - What is a "miracle"?** ...this has a lot to do with how WE define "normal" stuff vs unusual stuff. ...w/ how we create or frame a category that describes a "Supernatural God" (divine/heavenly) interacting with a "Natural World" (human/earthly).

"One problem for anyone writing a book about miracles is that there is no universally agreed-upon definition. In popular usage. Miracles might include the New York Mets winning the World series in 1969... Probably the most common definition of a miracle throughout history, from Augustine to Aquinas, has been a divine action that transcends the ordinary course of nature and so generates awe. By 'transcending the ordinary course of nature,' these thinkers don't just mean an unusually awesome sunset. They mean something you would never expect to happen on its own." **Craig Keener**, "Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World", p. 3

**2 Realities that will help us: (1) God created a world that has "Natural Law" in it. ...(2) We ponder the miraculous, when conditions change in unnatural ways**

>> **HOWEVER... God always intended to be "Providentially Present" in creation** ("he upholds the universe by the word of his power" Heb 1:3) ...**AND... God intended to INTRUDE** (God's Manifest Presence in Eden; Angelic visitations (Abraham, Sodom) & Holy Spirit impartations (Joel's Prophecy)!). ...**Thus, God is "Supernaturally Manifest" in a Variety of Ways—Some more Unusual/Exceptional than Others**

**A Hidden Problem in Our Developing Faith for the Supernatural—Is Our Failure to See the Ministry of the Spirit in Ways that He is Actually Present and Manifest!** ...**BEWARE** of becoming "Blind to the Supernatural"!

## The Ministry of the Spirit in CONVERSION

...(Brief) **What is 'Conversion'?** ...a moment of "unnatural" phenomena coming on the scene of your life!  
Conversion involves things like ... "new birth" ... "sight" ... "understanding" ... "conviction" ... "faith"  
... "repentance" ... "new Lordship" ... "indwelling of the Spirit"

"What if I look you in the eye and ask, 'Are you a Christian? Do you have saving faith in Jesus?' And what if you say, 'Yes, I do,' and I then ask, 'How did that happen? How did you cease to be a person who preferred other things to God and become a person who treasures Christ?' Will you be able to give me a true, biblical answer? This is not theoretical. This is urgent. ...It feels like something great hangs in the balance. And it does." **John Piper**, Providence, p. 515

**Eph 2:1-5** <sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

## Our Conditions & Our Motivating Forces

**"DEAD"** ...features one's INABILITY!

"Dead" communicates NON-POTENTIAL! ..."Dead" communicates INABILITY! ..."Dead" communicates SEPARATION!

"Adam dies spiritually. He has not only consented to evil doing, but he has welcomed the virus of wickedness into his soul and his being. Previously, he suffered no infection and knew no iniquitous pollution or contamination. Now, his whole person suffers the effects of the fall. Made a spiritual being, Adam cannot commune with God by his nature. He does not know the Lord, and he is sealed off from the divine. ... They are not separated from God by a little distance, like a sick patient whom the doctors quarantine in another room. The sinner is now separated from God by an infinite distance, a gap unclosable by human means." **Owen Strachan**, "Reenchanting Humanity", p. 80

**1 Cor 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

...What does this do to your pondering your own "conversion"?—Where did my ability to "Understand" and "Accept" come from?

**Rom 8:7-11** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

...to become a Christian—is to "Love God & Entrust yourself to Him" (What happened to the "Hostility"?). ...it is to "Submit to His Lordship" (How did that willingness come?)

"The natural person' means simply the kind of ordinary person we all were until the Spirit of God broke in and took us beyond a merely 'natural' condition. This natural person 'is not able to understand' the glory of Christ for what it really is. To the natural mind Christ is not a glorious Savior and supreme treasure." **John Piper**, Providence, p. 514

**Rom 8:9, 11** "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you." ...<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in you."

**...THIS is Massive "condition-interference"! ...This is some form of "Spiritual Invasion"—this is describing an "INTRUSION" of the Spirit!! ...This is NOT NATURAL!!**

### **"Dead"... but very "alive" to something!**

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,

- ...NOT indifferent or dispassionate or neutral! ...but "walking, following, passionate, & desiring"
- ...the "mind" and the "course of this world"--are very much in play! Very Active contributors!

**Eph 4:17-19** "...you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

**DARKENED** ("Darkened, alienated, ignorance, hardness of heart" ...These are "FORCEFUL Words"!! Words that create a particular condition/existence) ...These words have a "defining/determinative" influence on our "will & want-to"!!

**John 3:19-20** "...the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light,"

...the evil of our lives has its source in this "inward corruption"!

"...the chains are not external, preventing us from having our dearest wants; they are internal. They are our dearest wants. We do not stay in darkness because the door into light is locked. No. We stay in darkness because we 'love the darkness' and 'hate the light'. The cannot is the impossibility of loving what you don't love and hating what you don't hate." **John Piper**, Providence, p. 519

**2 Cor 4:3-6** <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

...The Bible repeatedly recognizes a "BLINDING" effect on man! (Which means "seeing" is Doubly-Difficult!—"Darkness & Blinded"!!)

... Paul Used a Creation ILLUSTRATION! ...**Gen 1:2-3** "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

- Notice the "Source/Mean" of This "LIGHT"!! ...**The Spirit of God!** ...ie, NOT creation and NOT the human heart!

## **CAPTURED/ENSLAVED**

**Rom 6:17-18** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin

...**The Human Will (ie, our Decision Making + our Want-to) is a lot of things in Scripture that "Contradict" the idea of "FREE"!!** ...**Dead, Dark, Unwilling, Hostile, Corrupt, Given Over, Enslaved, Captive, Deceived, Alienated, Confused,**

## **Conversion is an Intrusion of the Spirit!**

### **Acts 26 ...Paul's Conversion**

...v. 9-12 ...Paul's Inner Eagerness! ... "convinced" ... "opposing" ... "hostile" (locking people up, putting them to death) ... "punishing" ... "raging fury of persecution"

...v. 13-17 ...The INTRUSION of God ... a "Supernatural Encounter"!! ... an intrusive act of God-- "Appearing & Appointing"

-- This is NOT God Leaving Paul to Himself—to decide of his Own Free Will—to be a Christian!

...v. 18 ...Paul's Ministry described

...**The Miracle of 'Opened Eyes' ENABLES their Turning!!** ...They are in need of seeing something that becomes the "compelling force" at work IN THEM!! ...

...Jesus Ministry described - **Luke 4:18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

## **The Intrusion of CONVICTION**

**Jn 16:7-8** Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

"The word John uses for 'convict' means 'to scorn', 'to pour contempt' and 'to convince'. It is this severe ministry which the Holy Spirit exercises in his office of Advocate. ...of necessity, the Spirit must accomplish this painful work in men's hearts. ...The Spirit convicts us of sin in order to bring us to Christ. Conviction of sin is the process by which we gain a proper perspective on our lives in the sight of God so that we may cast ourselves upon his grace and mercy in the cross." **Sinclair Ferguson**, "The Christian Life", p. 36

**Acts 2:14** <sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ...<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 16:13-14** And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. <sup>14</sup> A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. (NASB)

**John 3:3, 6, 8** Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ... <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ... <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

**...If you are a Christian—a Supernatural Thing has Happened in Your Life—Bigger, More Mysterious, More Awe-Inspiring ...Than healing a disease, casting out a demon, giving a mind-blowing prophetic word, etc.!!**

**...So, Have You Ever Experienced a Miracle FIRSHAND??**

"Sometimes we treat stories of dramatic conversions (say, from drugs and sexual bondage to freedom and purity in Christ) as amazing, and treat a conversion story like mine (at the age of six that I can't even remember) as boring. That's a problem. One of our wise youth leaders at the church I served loved to say to the young people who had grown up in the church, 'Resurrections from the dead are never boring! So your conversion wasn't.' Here's the basic problem with such thinking: we thing the magnitude of the miracle of conversion is shown more clearly in our circumstances than in the Bible. That's not true." **John Piper, Providence**, p. 516