

In the book of Acts only Paul, Peter, the apostles, Stephen, Philip, and possibly Barnabas perform miracles or healing. All of these men were closely identified with Jerusalem at the beginning of the Church. This agrees with the Epistles, particularly the statement in Hebrews 2:3-4 that the Lord confirmed by miracles the testimony of those who heard and saw the Lord. The evidence of Acts refers mainly to actual historical incidents where miracles were performed, and the Epistles give evidence more in the realm of teaching. However, the facts are consistent in both cases.

There is no evidence that anyone today is performing miracles or healings as the New Testament describes them. Very few people claim to perform the miracle directly, and those who profess to do so often fail. The Holy Spirit never fails. None of the claims are of the magnitude or quality of those in the New Testament., Few people have alleged to perform such miracles in public, and that on bystanders. The early incidents concerned multitudes of healings without any failures. Today there are mostly failures. One failure is sufficient ground for doubting that the gift is from the Holy Spirit. There is not enough correspondence between the Biblical descriptions and today's so-called miracles and healings to allow any credence to the allegation that they are the spiritual gifts of the New Testament.

Not only do today's claims fail to live up to the New Testament, but this has been true throughout church history. It is abundantly clear that no one in the history of the Church since apostolic times has performed miracles and healing as described in the early part of the book of Acts. The ability was restricted even at the beginning. The purported instances in church history are few and not validated. The proposed cases are so rare that the incidents are regarded as phenomenal. The rarity of claims is in itself evidence that God is not giving this gift to the church at large. How else can we explain the scarcity of claims and total lack of real evidence for such gifts since the first century?

There is no evidence from any source to demonstrate that sign gifts from the Holy Spirit, such as working of miracles and gifts of healings, are present today. The Biblical evidence indicates that the sign gifts were given to confirm the gospel message of eyewitnesses of the Lord to a world where the gospel was unknown. James 5:14-15 shows that the early Church was instructed to react to sickness in much the same way as the noncharismatic Bible-believing churches do today. The implication is that healers and miracle-workers were not available. Miraculous answers to prayer by God are not proof that individuals have the gift of miracles or healing. In addition, since miraculous experiences may not be from God (Matthew 7:22-23), all experiences must be verified by Scripture. Certainly, until adequate Biblical support for today's claims is presented, there is no reason to give any credence to the present claims to exercise these gifts.

If we are to follow the example of the first-century church, as so many propose today, then we should refer to the church