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Epilogue to the Fools Speech

12: 11-13

Epilogue to the Fools Speech DIG: How do we know this is an epilogue to the Fools Speech? What is Paul trying to accomplish in his epilogue? How had the false apostles distorted his ministry (see 2:7, 10:8-9, 11:7)? In what way had Paul not been a burden to the Corinthians?

REFLECT: How hard is it to be slandered by people that you have ministered to? How would you defend yourself and your reputation? Would you feel foolish responding to ridiculous accusations? Would you feel foolish in doing so? Or would you even dignify their comments?

The things that prove I am an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles - were done in your presence, despite what I had to endure.



Paul began his “Fools Speech” in 11:1 (to see link click [By](#) - Being Deceived). Now, in a brief epilogue to the speech, he revisits a number of prominent themes already covered in the letter. In 12:11 he said: I have behaved like a fool, but you forced me to do it - you who should have been commending me. For I am in no way inferior to the false apostles (see [Af](#) - The Problem of the False Apostles) even if I am nothing. First, the apostle reiterates that the extensive boast that he had just completed (11:21 to 12:10) was an exercise in foolishness. In 11:1 Paul alerted the Corinthians to the fact

that **foolishness** was coming, and **he begged their tolerance** of it. In **11:16** **he** insisted that a certain person not be allowed to cast **him** as a **fool**, but immediately **Paul** turned around and **pleaded** with **the Corinthians** to embrace **him** as a **fool**, since **they** were so good at embracing **fools (11:19)**. At the very front door of **his** speech, **he** admitted that **he** was **speaking foolishly (11:21)**. Thus, it is no surprise that, after finishing the foolish speech, **he** admits: **I have behaved like a fool**. This is the last time **Paul** mentions **fool** or **foolishness** in the letter.²⁸⁰

Supporting **his** contention that **he** lacked nothing in comparison to **the false apostles**, **Paul** continued: **The things that prove I am an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles - were done in your presence, despite what I had to endure (12:12)**. On the day of Shavu'ot, **Peter** proclaimed that **Yeshua's** ministry had been validated in part by **signs: Men of Isra'el, hear these words! Yeshua of Nazareth - a Man authenticated to you by God with mighty deeds and wonders and signs God performed through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know (Acts 2:22a)**. Accordingly, **the apostles themselves** performed many **signs and wonders**, which authenticated them as genuine messengers of **God**. **They** had a one-of-a-kind, non-repeatable, and nontransferable role in the history of the Church. Therefore, **Yeshua** could say to **the Twelve: Yes, indeed! I tell you that a person who receives someone I send receives me, and that anyone who receives Me receives the One who sent Me (John 13:20)**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that to follow **You** with all our heart is the wisest thing that anyone can do. It is foolish to hear and know about **You** and then not to give **You** everything. **You** are so loving! Following **You**, brings comfort as we seek to do **Your** will. **Your** love desires to reward **Your** children (**First Corinthians 3:11-15**). **You** offer crowns to **Your** children; **the Imperishable Crown (First Peter 1:4, First Corinthians 9:25)**, **the Crown of Righteousness (Second Timothy 4:8)**, the Crown of Rejoicing (**First Thessalonians 2:19**), **the Crown of Glory (First Peter 5:4)** and **the Crown of Life (Revelation 2:10)**.*

*Athletes who train for the Olympics spend so much time, energy, and mental anguish over something that will soon pass away (**Corinthians 9:24**). Wisdom says be wise and work for an eternal reward. Whatever talent **God** gave you, use it wisely for **Him (Matthew 25:14-30)**.*

*Wisdom looks at life thru **Your** lens of eternity. Fools live for life now, but the wise meditate on eternity and live pleasing **You** for an eternal joy! May all we do, say and think bring honor and glory to **Your** name. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection.*

Amen

The signs that were the benchmark of a true apostle of Yeshua Messiah were done by Paul at Corinth. The passive voice of the verb translated were done emphasized that it was the power of ADONAI working through Paul that enabled him to perform those signs. The apostles were conduits for divine power, not deceptive magicians. That the Corinthians saw firsthand the signs Paul performed is another reason they should have defended him.

In addition to the supernatural signs, wonders and miracles, the Bible lists seven characteristics of the apostles. First, the apostles were sovereignly chosen by God for their ministry (Acts 9:15); second, the apostles were personally appointed by the Lord Yeshua Messiah (Luke 6:13; John 15:16); third, the apostles had to have been eyewitnesses of Messiah's life, death and resurrection. After Judas' defection and suicide, his replacement had to meet very specific requirements (see the commentary on Acts Ak - Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas); fourth, the apostles received the Gospel by direct revelation from Yeshua Messiah, not other men (Matthew 20:17-19; John 13-17). Paul, though he did not sit under Messiah's teaching during the Lord's earthly ministry, nevertheless received the Gospel directly from Him (Galatians 1:1-12); fifth, the apostles were the foundation of the Church (Ephesians 3:3-4); sixth, the apostles were given unique ministry duties, like preaching the Gospel (Mark 3:14), having the authority to cast out demons (Mark 3:15; Matthew 10:1-8; Luke 9:1), and writing the B'rit Chadashah. While it is true that not all the apostles wrote B'rit Chadashah books, all of the B'rit Chadashah was written by an apostle (Paul, Peter, John, Matthew), or a close associate of the apostles (Mark, Luke, James, Jude); seventh, the twelve apostles were promised unique honors during the Messianic Kingdom (Matthew 19:27-28) and in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14). Consequently, the stringent requirements for the apostolic office were such that only the Twelve and Paul qualified. Therefore, the claims of apostleship made by others throughout the history of the Church, including those who claim to be apostles today, are also false.²⁸¹

Signs, wonders and miracles (12:12c): These words do not describe three types of miracles but miracles in general considered from different aspects - their ability to authenticate the message, or signs, evoke awe, or wonders, and display divine power, or mighty deeds. The supernatural miracles done by the apostles were signs pointing to them as genuine messengers of God. They were wonders that created amazement and astonishment, drawing the onlookers' attention to the message that the apostles proclaimed.

That **miracles** are not standard in every period in Church history should be obvious from **Paul's** description of **them** as **signs of an apostle**. If **they** were commonplace, they could hardly have distinguished **the apostles** from ordinary believers. It was the fact that **they** were rare, as well as their unusual greatness, that made **them** definitive signs of **the apostles**. Nor were **miracles** scattered haphazardly throughout Church history. Scripture reveals a threefold purpose for **signs, wonders and miracles** that confined them to specific periods.

First, **miracles** introduced successive eras of divine revelation. The miracles recorded in the Bible took place during three specific time periods: the time of **Moshe** and **Joshua**, the time of **Elijah** and **Elisha**, and the ministry of **Messiah** and **the apostles**. **ADONAI** confirmed the giving of the Torah with the miracles of **Moses** and **Joshua**. The **miracles** done by **Elijah** and **Elisha** symbolized the second great era of the TaNaKh, **the prophets (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40)**. But by far the greatest number of **miracles** occurred during the ministry of **Yeshua**, authenticating **Him** as **the Messiah**, and **His apostles** as **His** representatives.

The second purpose of **miracles** was to authenticate **the messengers of God**. While all miracles are supernatural acts of **God**, not all supernatural acts of **God** are miracles. These **signs, wonders, and miracles** were supernatural acts done *through human beings*. **Miracles** were designed to act as **signs** creating **wonder** that drew people to conclude that the message from those who performed **them** came from **God**. Such expressions of **God's** power as creation, the Flood, and other acts of divine judgment are the supernatural acts of **God**, but not **signs** and **wonders**. They are in a different category, so to speak.

Third, **God** used **miracles** to reveal truth about **Himself** to those who observed **them (Exodus 6:6-7; Nehemiah 9:10; Psalm 135:9; Jeremiah 32:20)**. However, the office of an apostle was never intended to be a perpetual institution; in fact, there are clear indications in the B'rit Chadashah that the apostolic age was already drawing to a close. According to **Acts 5:16**, all the sick who came to **the apostles** were healed. But by the end of **Paul's** lifetime the situation had drastically changed. **His** beloved son in the faith **Timothy** faced a recurring illness. But instead of healing **him**, **Paul** counseled **him** to treat the illness by drinking **wine (First Timothy 5:23)**. Nor was **Paul** able to heal another of **his** close companions, **Trophimus**, whom **he** had to leave **sick** at **Miletus (Second Timothy 4:20)**.

The early days of the Messianic community in Jerusalem were punctuated by **signs and wonders (Acts 2:43 and 5:12)**. Yet **Acts** records no miracles in that City after the

martyrdom of **Stephen (Acts 6:8)**. Some might argue that **the apostles** left the City, and thus were not present to perform **miracles**. Yet **they** remained in Tziyon after the outbreak of the persecution associated with **Stephen's death (Acts 8:1)**. The supernatural invincibility afforded **the apostles** during the early years (**Acts 12:6-11**) was also gradually withdrawn, and all **the apostles** were martyred except **John** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Cy - These are the Names of the Twelve Apostles**). Finally, the writer to the **Hebrews** spoke both of **the apostles (those who heard the Lord)** and of **the signs and wonders they** performed in the past tense (**Hebrews 2:3-4**). **Their** qualifications and foundational role in **God's** plan for the Church made **the apostles** unique. Having laid a solid doctrinal foundation for the Church, **they** passed from the scene, along with **the signs and miracles** associated with **them**, never to be replaced.²⁸²

In **12:13** the letter returns to perhaps the main bone of contention that some at **Corinth** had with **Paul**: **he** would not take **their** money for **his** ministry. **Is there any way in which you have been treated as inferior to any of the other congregations, except that I was never a burden to you?** **Paul** continued to press **his** case with irony. **He** asked in what respect **they** were worse off than other churches except that **he** didn't weigh **them** down with financial obligations to **him**. **He** didn't want **their** money, **he** wanted **their** hearts. The **"I"** in **"I was never a burden to you"** is emphatic, meaning **"I myself."** It set **him** apart from **the false apostles** who had exploited **them (11:20)**. Surely, **they** didn't believe that refusing to sponge off **them** somehow disqualified **him** as **an apostle**? If **they** counted that wrong as a sin, **he** mockingly asked for **their forgiveness**. **For this unfairness, please forgive me**. Unlike **his opponents**, **he** was no peddler of the Gospel and would not be put in a position where **he** needed to fawn over **his** benefactors to repay their support and keep the gifts coming. **God** forbid! **He** lived out the Gospel principle of not seeking **his** own advantage but that of others.²⁸³

As is **his** method, **Paul** introduces into the end of a section a theme that **he** will pick up and expand upon in the new section, in this case, that **he** has not nor will **he** be a burden to them. Well, the lines had been drawn, the issues put on the table. Now it was time for **the church** at **Corinth** as a whole, and those who had been duped by **the false apostles** in particular, to make some tough choices. To further encourage **them**, **Paul** assured **them** that **he** was going to make a third visit to see **them** (see **Ce - Paul's Planned Third Visit**).²⁸⁴