

ROMANS (15:19A)

Where's My Miracle?

PART 93 – JANUARY 21, 2007

SIGNS & WONDERS

Last week I shared a rather embarrassing story.

As we said our goodbyes at the exit, I discovered that many of you had similar stories. Many more than I needed to hear!



As I walked the aisle (after 2nd service), a woman said something that made me very sad ... sad that *I* hadn't thought of it! So, you get it a week late! She said:

- God can turn any mess into a message!

If you weren't here last week, you've gotta be really curious!

Today we're examining the first half of verse *nineteen*, which is the second half of the sentence that began in verse *eighteen*. Got that? I wanted to save the 2nd half of the *sentence* (the 1st half of verse 19), for a message of its own. So, let's re-read verse 18 (from last week), and end with today's scripture:

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done — by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. - *Romans 15:19a NIV*

Paul said that the Gentiles were brought to obedience by what he had "said and done"; and then he defines exactly what he'd done:

By the power of signs and miracles (15:19a)

These two words are coupled throughout the Bible; "signs and miracles", or more often, "signs and wonders".



Q: Have you ever wondered what the difference is between "signs" and "miracles" (i.e. wonders)?

- A sign communicates a message
- A miracle gets your attention

Now, it gets just a bit more complicated because *sometimes* the term, “mighty work” is added to the mix.



So, let’s look at Jesus walking on water:

The “Wonder” is easy to see: He’s walking on water!

The “Sign” is that: Jesus has authority over nature.

The “Mighty work” was: the impact on Peter’s faith.

So, “the power of signs and miracles” is when God sends a message to change lives (in this case the obedience of the Gentiles) by suspending or superseding the natural laws of physics. But, Paul says that it was: by what I have “said” *and* “done”

- God works through both words *and* wonders

Q: Which are more powerful the words or the wonders?

Well, there is no scripture I’m aware of that tells us that faith comes from seeing the miracles; but we are told that:

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. - *Romans 10:17 NIV*

Miracles have never been the direct means of saving people the way that God’s Word is. As wonderful as wonders are ...

- Miracles have always had a supporting role

The primary role of miracles has been to substantiate, validate, and authenticate the message of God and the messenger He’s sent.

So, let’s get to the big question; the reason that I thought this little line should have a message all its own:

Q: Should *we* expect the *same* miraculous confirmations today?

A: Yes ... but not in the same measure that the Apostle Paul, the disciples, or the Son of God experienced.

I say, “Yes” because there’s no statement in the New Testament that says that God has declared a “moratorium” on miracles.

And, Paul says that *his* signs and miracles were done:

Through the power of the Spirit (15:19b)

And the same Holy Spirit has been poured out on us, and He is still fully capable of accomplishing signs and wonders. And not only that, Paul gives us a list of *miraculous gifts* that are intended for the church, and not just Apostles:

... to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers ...
- 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV

So, I believe that we should regularly pray for the miraculous intervention of God. And we should expect that some believers will be more fruitful in this than others.

But, I say, "Not in the same measure" for two reasons:

1. Jesus performed miracles to validate His oneness with God, and the new Kingdom that He was announcing.

If it weren't for miracles, Jesus would've been dismissed immediately and universally as a blasphemer. Over and over Jesus says things like:

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. - *John 14:11 NIV*

2. Paul saw miracles as a validation of the apostles as they proclaimed the Good News and established the early Church.

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. - *2 Corinthians 12:12 NRS*

So, it isn't that wonders ever ceased; but there was something extraordinary in how God worked to introduce His New Covenant.



Signs and wonders have taken on a different role:

- Miracles now function as an expression of grace

And God's loving wisdom dictates that He doesn't always heal. Even Paul – the *Apostle* – had an ailment that he referred to as his "thorn in the flesh" that God refused to heal. (*2 Cor. 12:7-9*)

There are two mistakes we can make:



1. Putting too much emphasis on miracles

Some believers think, for example, that the Lord never wills for His children to be sick, but that we should *always* be *miraculously* healed. These folks often view medicine and doctors as "un-spiritual".

Yet, we see many places in scripture where God communicated *through* illness and handicap.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." - 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 NIV

However, when Paul wrote to Timothy, he not only told him to:

... use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. - 1 Timothy 5:23 NIV

He also informed Timothy that their fellow worker, Trophimus had to be left sick in Miletus. (2 Timothy 4:20) And even Jesus, when he described the epitome of a "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:34) He portrayed him as doctoring an injured man, and treating his wounds.

But there's a second mistake we can make:



2. Putting too little emphasis on miracles

Some believers have the opposite problem; they slip into a naturalistic, humanistic way of thinking that almost invalidates the power of prayer as something kind of irrelevant.

When they pray, they're almost afraid to ask God to heal people directly and miraculously. We want to put the right emphasis on miracles – asking and expecting God to act in perfect love, wisdom, and authority; but not demanding our will and our way. Which extreme do you tend to lean toward?

I know that when Pastor John prays for our sick in the "Family News", he makes an effort to avoid either of these two extremes.

- John gets some difficult situations to pray for.

[I've asked John to share with us his thought process]

When it comes to God's miraculous intervention in our lives, and the lives of our loved ones, we need to ask, *fully believing* in our loving, gracious Father's power to perform.

But at the same time, we must avoid dictating or demanding the when, where, and the how of it to the One who is all-knowing. There's no reason to be embarrassed if God knows better than to follow our time-table! He's working from an eternal time-line.

When it comes to signs and miracles, we must truly and faithfully desire what we know Paul desired: *Thy* will – not *my* will – be done.