

Doctrine of Miracles

Introduction

Billy Graham was once asked if he believed in hell. He replied, “*I believe in hell because the Bible teaches it.*” If I were asked if I believed in miracles I would reply, “*I believe in miracles because the Bible teaches it— and also because I have witnessed a miracle.*” On Wednesday, July 2, 2003 Marta Murrell was moments away from surgery when told she could go home. A final x-ray just before the operation revealed that the lump in her body had disappeared. On the Sunday before the surgery she had asked to be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord, which was done. And God was merciful. He worked a miracle of mercy.

1. By definition it can be said that a miracle refers to a supernatural intervention into the normal affairs of men in order to establish a person’s authority, manifest the power of God or achieve a desired effect.
2. One illustration of these converging objectives is found in the life of Moses. Moses was empowered with the ability to work miracles, not only to have credibility in the court of Pharaoh and manifest the power of God, but also to harden Pharaoh’s heart. The story is told in Exodus 7.
 - *Exodus 7:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. 2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. 3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. 6 And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they. 7 And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh. 8 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. 10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. 13 And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*
3. It is a wonderful moment when a miracle is witnessed. But the witnessing of a miracle does not produce faith, for the heart forgets easily, and slides back into unbelief.

The thought comes that what happened was an act of magic or perhaps a natural phenomena not yet realized. In one of his books, a character of Mark Twain's fertile imagination takes advantage of an eclipse to "make" the moon turn dark (*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*).

4. Sometimes those who are skeptical about a miracle taking place have a right to be suspicious. January 1984, L.M. Boyd, writing for a paper called Crown Syndicate, reported this event. *"Everybody in the hospital was awaiting a visit from Pope John Paul II. A doctor with a handful of paperwork took a seat in a wheelchair and busied himself with his notes. The Pope swept in, and blessed the doctor, who immediately stood up and walked forward. The devout in the Pope's entourage crossed themselves and rolled their eyes upward."*

Miracles are more easily dismissed than delighted in.

5. Despite the many miracles that Jesus performed, the hearts of the disciples were naturally prone to dismiss or forget what they had beheld. For example, one day after witnessing the feeding of five thousand people, the disciples became terrified when they found themselves in the midst of a storm. So the Lord performed another miracle. He came to the boat walking on the water.

Mark 6: 51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. 52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

The disciples were astonished beyond measure because they failed to link one miracle with the last in the person of Jesus Christ.

6. There is a balance to the Christian faith. While miracles are not to be dismissed or disbelieved when they happen, nor should a miracle be assigned where none exists. C. S. Lewis reminds the Christian community of this truth. *"God seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye."* (*Studies in Theology*).
7. From time to time God is pleased to give individuals the power to perform a miracle. The apostles had power to perform signs and wonders. In Acts 3 the story is told of the healing of a cripple man (Acts 3: 1-11). Upon investigation by the religious authorities it was conceded that a miracle had taken place.
 - *Acts 4:16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.*
 - *Acts 4:22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.*

8. Anyone who performs a bonified miracle in the name of Jesus is not to be censured. One day John came to the Lord and said, "*Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us*" (Mark 9:38).
 - *Mark 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.*

9. Herod wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle for the purpose of entertainment, and not to bring honor and glory to God.
 - *Luke 23:8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.*

10. Jesus had authority to perform a miracle over nature reflected in turning water into wine, and He had power to perform a miracle of physical healing reflected in His second miracle, the healing of a nobleman's son. The story is told in John 4:46-54.
 - *John 4:54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.*

11. Jesus established His messianic claims by performing miracles.
 - *John 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*
 - *John 10:41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.*
 - *John 12:18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.*

12. Does God still work miracles today? The short answer is "Yes." According to a study conducted by Princeton Religion Research Center's (PRRC Emerging Trends, November 1988) 82 % of those questioned responded in a positive way to the statement, "*Even today, miracles are performed by the power of God.*"

13. God is a miracle working God. But we must be careful to note the following.
 - Whether or not a miracle is performed ultimately depends upon the sovereignty of God. The *Bible* teaches that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy (Romans 9:15).
 - For God to heal one person and not another at a given moment does not mean that the person not healed is loved less, for nothing can separate the believer from the love of God (Romans 8:39).

- Sometimes faith is part of the divine consideration in the working of a miracle.

Illustration. One day a centurion came to Christ asking that his child be healed. *“And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour” (Matthew 8:13).*

Illustration. On another occasion a woman with an issue of blood found a way to touch the hem of the Lord’s garment as He walked by. *“But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour” (Matthew 9:22).*

- Sometimes faith is not part of the divine consideration as to whether or not a miracle of healing will take place. A gracious act of healing mercy can take place in the midst of great unbelief.

Illustration. In Matthew 9:23-26 we read of Jesus going into a ruler’s house where He *“saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, 24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.”*

- Of course the Lord is most pleased when faith is present that He will do right in ever situation—regardless of the outcome. In other words, there is to be no presumptuous expressions of faith. True faith does not believe in mere words. The true object of faith is God. What has God said He will do?

14. Every Christian is the object of at least one miracle and that is the new birth. The power that brought Christ from the dead is the same omnipotent power displayed in the conversion and sustenance of a soul.

- *Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*