

“Miracles and Blessings”
Sunday, June 21, 2009
By Pastor Edward J. Thomas Jr.

Pastor Thomas started with this story:

As a young man was getting ready to graduate from high school, he desperately wanted a new car. He and his father went to the dealership and picked out the perfect one. On the day of his graduation party, he was full of anticipation. When the time came for the young man to open gifts, he carefully shook the box from his father. He was sure the keys to his new car were in there, but he didn't hear them jingling. Instead, there was a small thud as he shook the box from side to side. When the young man opened the box, he found a Bible. He was furious! The young man stormed out of the house and forever damaged his relationship with his father.

Years passed and the young man and his father never reconciled. After his father's death, the son returned home and found the same box that was given to him on the day of his graduation party. His mother explained that his father had kept it for all those years in hopes that one day his son would return and accept the gift.

As the son rifled through the pages of the still new Bible, an envelope fell out. Inside the envelope, he found a check for the exact amount of the car he had his heart set on.

What is a miracle? Miracles can be defined in three ways.

1. An extraordinary event; unfathomable in conditions of normal natural forces. It is not a miracle that God causes the sun to rise each morning, but it was a miracle when God caused the sun to stand still (Joshua chapter 10)
2. An occurrence which causes the witness to assume a phenomenal personal origin. There was a young man in John 9:25 who was miraculously healed from his blindness. He did not know exactly how it happened, but he *did* know that something phenomenal had taken place, and Jesus was the cause of it.
He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner [or no], I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.
3. An occasion which represents a proof. In Luke chapter 5 we read about a man that had palsy and could not get into Peter's mother-in-law's house to see Jesus. The solution was radical. His friends lifted him to the top of the house and broke through the roof so he could be healed. Everyone in the house that day saw a miracle that provided proof that Jesus was the Son of God.

In the Old Testament, miracles were done on a global and national scale. They were phenomena that proved the sovereignty of God over the physical world. The forty days and nights of rain (when it had never rained before) that flooded the entire earth was a huge example of God's power on a global scale. When he led the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, God saved a whole nation with one miracle. The walls of an entire city (Jericho) crumbled with no physical force, and God destroyed the cities Sodom and Gomorrah.

Those were amazing miracles that definitely presented proof that God is mighty. But today, we are living in New Testament times. Miracles throughout the New Testament are much more personal. God touches the lives of individuals and healed them not only physically, but spiritually. New Testament miracles show God's sovereignty over the spiritual world.

The Bible gives us six specific reasons for miracles:

1. To prove that Christ was of God
2. To prove His authority
3. To show that the kingdom of God had come
4. To confirm Jesus' message
5. To fulfill prophecy
6. to express Jesus' compassion

Pastor Thomas also reminded us that while we read about so many awe inspiring miracles throughout the Bible, there were many that were never written about.

John 20:30-31

30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

We know that miracles have a purpose, so what is it? Sometimes a miracle is done just for the person receiving it. Other times, miracles may be done for the people around the one receiving the miracle. Pastor Thomas talked about what we can all learn about living our daily lives from the miracle that was done for the woman with the issue of blood in Matthew 9.

Matthew 9:20-22

20. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind [him], and touched the hem of his garment:

21. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22. 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.

We can't be deterred by the crowds around us. We have to push through everything. It may be distraction we have to push through, maybe we have to get out of our comfort zones and really make an effort to spend some time with Jesus, but if we do, we can be healed. When we know we need something from God, we can't let anything stand in our way!

Often, Christians use the words blessing and miracle interchangeably. There is a difference between blessings and miracles though. Miracles are designed to prove who God is, and their effects are instantaneous. There is no recovery time for someone who has experienced a miracle, but God can certainly *bless* someone after surgery with a quick recovery time. Blessings are a gift God gives us as people who follow him. We need God's blessings every day. Miracles are a bonus.

God does not have to give us everything we ask for. Sometimes it's easy to assume that because God *can* do a miracle, that he *should* do a miracle for us. That is not necessarily the case. We can all learn from Paul's story about his "thorn in the flesh".

II Corinthians 12:7

7. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.
8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

A miracle can be in the form of our understanding being opened in an instant to know God's will for our lives. In this case, Paul's perspective was transformed from asking God to remove his suffering to knowing that God's grace was more than enough for him. That certainly fulfills the second reason for miracles: To prove God's authority.

Mark 16:17-18

17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
18. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

We can live a life that invites miracles to happen. Each of us can live a life that exemplifies God's authority and lives out this promise from scripture: "These signs shall follow them that believe".

Pastor Thomas encouraged each of us to live a life of such faith that we're excited to live for God. Take the time to get more effective for God through fellowship, prayer, fasting,

and study. He reminded us that being busy does not always equal being effective. Ask God to show us what miracles he is doing and what blessings he is giving us.