

The Patio Pulpit For October 21, 2020

“It’s a miracle!” Or is it?

As we’re getting started tonight, I would like to point out a truth that is staring us in the face and is one of those truths that should “go without saying” as in “it goes without saying.” It’s the old “as plain as the nose on your face” idiom. And that is, if God is not the author of confusion, and He most certainly is not, and these gifts are not available today, then why did He included them in His written word without even giving a hint that they were only for the 1st century church and could be passed down only by the apostles? To yours truly, that is absurd. I know the gifts have been faked throughout church history and we certainly have our fakers today by the thousands, but fakers must not be allowed to quench the Spirit and to suppress the gifts of the Spirit or define what miracles are. I will live by what the Bible does say and not by what the fakers say and do.

And speaking of thousands of fakes, the gift we’re looking at tonight, “miracles,” is one of the most popular among the fakers. The fakers have learned that an evil and adulterous generation seeks after signs and wonders and miracles and that these deceived multitudes can bring in the big bucks for the fakers. It’s the “law of supply and demand” in a spiritual environment. The evil and adulterous demand signs and wonders and miracles, so we will supply them.

That could work its way into a series, “**The Fakers.**” Maybe a best selling book that could turn into a hit movie on Netflix. “**The Fakers. Season 1 episode 1.**” I can see the opening scene with Benny Hinn waving his jacket in the air as hundreds of his dupes pretend to be “slain in the Spirit” as a huge choir led by Kanye West sings about Benny “How Great Thou Art.” But I digress.

Since our study tonight is on the gift of the power to work miracles given to an individual in the church who is given the power to work miracles as needed and when needed, I thought it appropriate to more or less define the event we call a miracle, at least the idea of a miracle as we find it in the Bible. We use the word much too lightly and reduce it to no more than something so trivial and common as finding a five dollar

bill in the parking lot of our favorite restaurant. I want to encourage my folks at Eastway to define miracles as the Bible does.

“A **miracle** is the end result of God intervening in the natural to bring about a change in the natural for His purposes and His glory.”

They can happen in one’s body or in the weather or in a fig tree or when God sovereignly influences someone’s mind like a world leader or the surgeon who is standing over you at the operating table who suddenly sees the problem after cutting on you thinking he already knew what the problem was. “Whoops!” isn’t what anyone wants to hear coming out of the surgeon’s mouth. Maybe an “ah ha!” But never a whoops, unless it’s “Woop, there it is.”

When Jesus took a few fish and loaves and fed 5,000, that was a bona fide miracle. When Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves while the apostles were freaking out thinking they were all going to perish was a miracle. Those were miracles. Finding money in a parking lot could be, but that is stretching it pretty far. People drop money everyday somewhere and someone else is bound to find it.

The Greek word translated "miracle(s)" as it occurs in our text is **δύναμις** and occurs 48 times total in the gospels and the book of Acts and a total of 120 times in the Greek New Testament. It means “power.” And it refers to an inner ability that comes from an outer source. It is an ability that the Spirit puts within the believer for a specific need at a specific time.

There is another word translated "miracles" in the Greek New Testament and it is the word that means "signs," **σημεία**. Miracles are signs and signs in the New Testament can be the miraculous. But regardless of whether it is miracles or signs, it is only genuinely so when it has its origin in the Spirit.

So, since there are genuine miracles and signs and wonders as defined by the written word of God, what about fake miracles and signs and wonders? A brief sampling of false signs and wonders and miracles will include religious statues or icons that suddenly start bleeding or glowing or whispering to some obscure individual in Latin America. The

infamous incident of Our Lady of Fatima back in 1917 was a fake miracle. And how about the proven false “leg lengthenings” performed by the false teacher of our day, Todd White? And what about those who fake miracles such as healings the way Benny Hinn and Earnest Angley and the Copelands fake them? And what about the non-verifiable and absolutely ridiculous healings reported by the false prophet Todd Bentley who claims that God told him to kick an old lady in the face if he wanted to see her healed? Or the lie he told about throwing a cancer-ridden infant against a wall and then kicking it the way one kicks a softball. And what about the made-up stories fake healers tell in order to get into the billfolds and purses and bank accounts of their gray-matter deficient dupes the way Jim and Tammy Bakker once fabricated stories back in the ‘70’s and ‘80’s?

Remember, beloved, we know the fake because we have the genuine. And we cannot know the fake without knowing the genuine. Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned and the lost cannot discern the difference. **1 Corinthians 2:14** *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Cor. 2:14 NAU)*

So, yes, my people at Eastway, I’ll take my cue from the written word of God when I want a definition of a miracle.

Now the gift.
to another *the effecting of miracles*,
(1 Cor. 12:8-10a NAU)

That’s an excellent translation of the Greek text, “the effecting of miracles.” Here are three of the other top Bible versions

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 12:10** To another the working of miracles

^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 12:10** to another miraculous powers,

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 12:10** to another the working of miracles,

They're all excellent. But it still doesn't hurt to consult reliable commentaries on any verse or phrase in the word of God. The commentaries I consulted for this study agree that we can read v.10 this way, "to another are given 'activities that elicit miracles.'" And we must not forget that this activity that elicits miracles (powers) is strictly from the Spirit and the Spirit alone. It is not an activity that originates with us. It isn't something we decide we want to happen. That's when people in the church can get themselves into some dark places. **A miracle is an activity that originates with the Spirit and is then manifested through His chosen vessel for a specific time and a specific need in the local church or anywhere else it is needed.** A miracle may actually be something we want to see happen in our local assembly because it is what we think our church needs when we witness one of our own suffering. So, it's legitimate to seek this gift for God's glory and the good of our members. But it's also legitimate to do so following the guidelines laid out for us in the word. **1 Corinthians 14:1** *Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.* (1 Cor. 14:1 NAU)

⁷ *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* (1 Cor. 12:7 NAU)

²⁶ *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; i* (1 Cor. 12:26 NAU)

In light of what we are learning about God's working in the church, the body of His Son, don't you find it almost laughable that fake healers always announce miracles and signs and wonders before they ever arrive in town to make themselves richer.

I want to suggest to you that only God knows when and where these things will happen. If anyone ever announces before his or her arrival in Charlotte, "We're going to witness signs and wonders and

miracles and healings and deliverance from demons,” flee from such. They are liars and deceivers.

I close with this, if you or someone you know who is a disciple of Christ needs a miracle, a work of power in their life such as healing, feel free and blessed by God and come to Him knowing what you now know.

¹⁶ *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16 NAU)*

What is your need? Is today a time of need for you or a loved one? In Jesus' name. Amen.