

# Faith and Miracles

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | July 25, 2008



During my freshman year of college a rather unusual event occurred one Thursday morning when, during chapel, the entire university student body came face to face with the question of faith and miracles.

A young man who was a quadriplegic from a diving accident was brought into the sanctuary. The speaker instructed the students that we were going to see a miracle, that God was going to move and heal this young man. He told all 2000 of us to kneel and to pray. He told us to pray to clear our hearts, to remove any doubt from our minds, to remove any distraction from our consciousness. Then he told us to pray that God would miraculously heal this young man. He and several others gathered around the man and placed hands on him and they began to pray. We students began to pray, and we prayed and prayed. There were girls crying all over the auditorium, some were praying out loud, others were peaking toward the stage watching to see a “miracle.” But, after what seemed hours, when in fact was less than an hour, no miracle happened and the young man was not healed.

Many of the students were shaken by this event. Some struggled with questions about their faith, questions about prayer, questions about God Himself. The speaker suggested there were doubters in the room and some students began to feel guilty.

Many of my patients struggle with questions about faith and miracles. They or their loved ones often have illness, disease, sickness and prayers to God are offered asking for divine intervention and miraculous healing. When a miracle doesn't occur many people begin to question their faith.

There is an unstated belief: If you have faith miracles will happen, if miracles don't happen it is because faith is weak. Is this really true? Is the idea that miracles happen when faith is strong but not when faith is weak Biblical? Or is it possible this idea could be almost 180 degrees backward from the truth?

Is it possible that miracles happen not for the strong in faith but for the weak? Is it possible that those whose faith is solid don't need the miracles but the babes in Christ still need miraculous signs and wonders? Is it possible that miracles often occur through the strong in faith but not for those with strong faith, that the purpose of the miracle is for those weak in faith? What does the Bible reveal?

When Gideon was called by God to defeat the Midianites did he ask for the miracles of the fleece because his faith was strong or because his faith was weak and he needed encouraging?

At Mount Carmel the fire fell from God consuming the sacrifice offered by Elijah, was the miracle given for Elijah to strengthen his faith or was the miracle given for the people who were weak in faith?

Consider Job, who God said "is perfect and righteous in all his ways there is no one on the earth like him." Job was a real man of faith, yet he lost all his wealth, his health and 10 children and no miracle came to deliver him. Did this tragedy happen to Job because his faith was weak or did it occur because his faith was so strong that God knew nothing, no matter how tragic, could shake Job out of trusting God?

When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace God miraculously intervened to save their lives, but for what purpose? Was it primarily to extend the lives of the men thrown into the furnace or was it a means of exposing the impotence of the golden idol, the truth about God and of reaching Nebuchadnezzar, a man weak in faith? By contrast notice the genuine mature faith of the three worthies who when threatened with a burning death put their lives into God's hands and trusted Him with the outcome knowing God could save, but allowing God not to intervene. They said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:17,18.

Consider the lives of the Apostles, God miraculously intervened in many places, but always as a means of spreading the gospel. When those mighty men of faith eventually lost their lives God did not miraculously intervene to save them (with the exception of John). Did God refuse to perform miracles to save His Apostles because they didn't have enough faith or was their faith so strong that they trusted God with their very lives? Was their faith so intense that God didn't have to perform a miracle to help them maintain their confidence in Him?

Many people believe that miracles are a good barometer of who we should believe or in whom we should place our faith. But in Eden the miracle of a talking serpent didn't make the serpent trustworthy. Satan often confuses the mind and obstructs the way to God by the use of miraculous signs and wonders. In fact, the Bible prophecies that before Christ returns Satanic agencies will perform miracles as a way of deceiving many (Mark 13:22, Rev 13:13, 16:14). Jesus said that in the end there will be those who claim to be Christian who have performed miracles in His name but who were never on God's

side (Matthew 7:21-23).

God wins people to faith in Him by the revelation His trustworthiness as revealed ultimately in life and death of Jesus Christ. Miracles can be counterfeited, the truth as revealed by Jesus cannot. The question is never about God's ability to perform miracles, the question is, do we know God well enough that our confidence will not be shaken when He doesn't miraculously intervene.

Genuine faith is not having confidence that God can perform miracles, but is trusting Him even when He doesn't.

If you, like many of my patients, have prayed for a miracle, a miracle of healing, a miracle of deliverance, a miracle of rejuvenation, yet God has not miraculously intervened don't be disheartened, don't doubt your faith, don't give in to discouragement. Instead, consider the possibility that your faith may be of such quality, solidity, maturity that God knows you, like Job, will not be shaken out of trusting Him. No matter what your hardship, let your unfailing trust in God shine out through the darkness of sin's oppressive assault and declare before the entire universe that God is worthy of our trust and you will not be shaken from Him. Miraculous intervention or no miraculous intervention God is worthy of our trust!