

Working of Miracles

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Study Given by W.D. Frazee—May 5,

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father” John 14:12.

That is a wonderful promise. I don't pretend to comprehend it. This verse is too big to comprehend, so let's enjoy what we get out of it.

In this text Jesus teaches us that He wants us to do the work that He did, and do it on a wider scale. Jesus working in this world was confined to a small area, largely Galilee and Judea. He was never far away from the place where He was born. Large sections of this world were not touched by His personal ministry. But He said to His disciples He wanted them to go out and reach every one. A greater work was done by the early church. We are told by inspiration that more people were converted on the Day of Pentecost under the preaching of the apostles than were during the entire period of Christ's public ministry.

We tend to think of things like raising the dead, opening the blind eyes, and cleansing the lepers. It includes all that. But there is something more wonderful than a miracle of physical healing. It is the miracle of conversion of proud hearts that find humility at the foot of the cross. I read:

“That which is greater than miracles, a firm reliance upon a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ was a sign that could not be controverted” *The Desire of Ages*, page 120.

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him” John 2:11.

The first miracle Jesus performed was the turning of the water into wine. That was called the beginning of His miracles. He was thirty years of age. Jesus spent thirty years in this world without working any miracles. So our understanding of our first text depends on our understanding of this text. If we learn the lesson Jesus learned during His thirty years, we will have more power to do some of the miracles He performed in His public ministry.

We would like to jump right in and lay hold of mighty miracles. We would like to lay hold of someone who has cancer and is dying and pull him out of the grave. We would like to open blind eyes. And God wants us to have that power. But unless we travel the road that Jesus traveled from the beginning we will never get to those glorious experiences.

The church is going to experience under the latter rain a mighty miracle working power. We believe that. The sick are to be healed. Signs and wonders will follow the believers. But Jesus lived thirty years before He worked any miracles. Mere passing of time will not enable us to work miracles. There are plenty of people older than that who have never worked miracles. But the Son of God, who came to this world to reveal His Father's plan of life, lived here among us for thirty years and never worked a miracle.

“None could say that He had worked a miracle; but virtue—the healing power of love—went out from Him to the sick and distressed” *The Desire of Ages*, page 92.

So Jesus was working without the miracle working power. He went for years and years limited by the same humanity that you and I have, and doing no more for people than you and I can do through the healing power of love. This was Jesus' preparation for that great outpouring of the Spirit that came upon Him when He was thirty years of age, and God used Him to work wonderful miracles.

Let's look at something else about these miracles. He did not work these miracles for His own benefit. Every time Jesus worked a miracle it was to relieve someone who needed help that could be relieved only in that way. That leads me to a very important principle in dealing with miracles. God never works miracles for our entertainment or selfish benefit, and He never works miracles when we can do it some other way. Why? Because a miracle is not the best way to get something done.

You say, That is strange. I wish I could always have a miracle.

In the wilderness the children of Israel ate manna for forty years. That was a miracle. But they got so used to it that they didn't think it was a miracle anymore. A miracle to you and me is something so out of the ordinary that we say, This is marvelous. This is the finger of God.

When Jesus found those five thousand men waiting hungry at the end of the long day, He broke the five loaves and two fishes. They multiplied in His hands. He fed the multitude, and fed His disciples. That whole experience was what we call a miracle.

How do we ordinarily get bread? Is it a miracle or not? That is all what we mean by a miracle. How long does it take to make the bread that we eat? It takes at least a year from the time the seed is sown, matured, gathered and processed. Finally it gets onto our tables. All that time God is working to produce something that will bring strength to us. Which do you think would be harder for God to do it, in one day like Jesus did, or a year? Which do you think is the greater manifestation of divine power? Which one can you do without God?

I am persuaded that either one is the power of God, whether He does it in one minute, one day, or one year. And from that standpoint both are miracles, if we

mean the power of God working. A miracle is the unusual interposition of God to do things in an unusual way, but I doubt if it is any more power on His part.

Take the first miracle Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. He told the servants to pour water into the jars. Then He told them to draw it out. They drew out wine. Chemists know that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen. Does grape juice have any hydrogen and oxygen in it? Yes. Does it have anything more? Carbon, iron, minerals, and some other things. God marvelously and instantly made a change there. We can't explain it. It was a miracle. But can you explain how the vine reaches down into the ground and gets the water? Can you explain how the sunlight falls on the leaves and works through the chlorophyll, and the carbon dioxide coming from the air mixes together and makes the grape so sweet and delicious? You can't explain it. You may be able to recite it, but not explain it. You may be able to pass an examination of what happens. But to tell exactly why and how it happens is creative work of God.

In Cana of Galilee He spoke and it was done. But usually He takes a year. It is the same power of God. Why does He take so long to do it ordinarily? One reason is that He wants to give you and me something to do besides just clapping our hands. He wants us to tend the vines, cultivate them, prune them, take care of them. This all takes time and work and effort and thought. That is what you and I need, not just for physical help, but for mental development. God knows what He is doing. And this applies to many things in life.

I was reading a very interesting statement about Brother B. I don't know who Brother B was. He is dead, and he won't hear it as I read it tonight:

"I saw that in temporal matters Brother B was too easy and negligent. He has lacked energy, considering it a virtue to leave to the Lord that which the Lord has left to him. It is only in cases of great emergency that the Lord interposes for us. We have a work to do, burdens and responsibilities to bear, and in thus doing we obtain an experience" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, page 212.

We get an experience by being challenged to put all we have into the work, whether it is growing corn or washing dishes, building fires, hoeing in the garden, giving treatments, and using our minds to think and plan the best ways to get things done. All this takes time and thought and effort, physical, mental, and spiritual. In this way we are developed and will obtain an experience. Watching God work what we call miracles will never give us that experience.

We might wish we could see manna fall everyday. Even in the falling of the manna God arranged it that the children of Israel had to do a number of things. The first thing they had to do was gather it. It was little like seeds. Then they had to process it. They ground it and beat it out. Then they cooked it. Some liked it boiled and some liked it baked. So it was quite a process. It must have taken them hours to get all that done. Even though it was a miracle for God to let that manna fall every day, yet God arranged that they would have something to do. So it is in the ways you and I get our food. We have something to do that takes exercise.

“Brother B manifests the same character in spiritual matters as in his temporal affairs. There is a lack of zeal and earnestness to make thorough work” *Ibid*.

Brother B's weakness was leaving to God what God had left him to do. He carried that weakness into spiritual things. And strange to say, if he would have lived long enough he would have caught up with the theology that says, That's the way to do it. There are people to think it is real religion to leave to God to do everything. You hear it said, Let go and let God. Another way of putting it is, I tried and tried, and it didn't do any good. So now I have learned to just turn it all over to God, and He does it.

Try that on your garden. While you are trying it on your garden, turn to Isaiah:

“For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” Isaiah 61:11.

Are we looking for righteousness?

Someone says, Brother Frazee, I believe in righteousness by faith, not righteousness by works.

I believe in righteousness by faith too, but my righteousness must be good enough to work. Faith is so good it works. I garden by faith. My sister and I were out yesterday planting. We planted by faith. We planted some beans in the ground. We have faith that God is going to watch over those beans and cause them to sprout. A few feet to the right I saw some we planted some days before, and they were coming up from the ground.

The way God is going to grow righteousness in us is the same way He makes the seeds sprout in the garden. That is what our text says. We can't do it without Him. He won't do it without us. Can we garden without God? Not a bit of it. Will He grow food for us without our participation? No. If you don't work nature will take over and you will have weeds. They grow without any effort. So in our lives. People who let go and let God, they are saying, I am not going to make any effort. I am not going to do anything about it. When God gets ready, He is going to give me the victory over my temper, overeating, gossiping, and discouragement.

Ah, dear ones, you and I have something to do to cooperate with God. And the greatest miracle in this world is the miracle of a surrendered life changed by the power of God. But God will not do it without our participation. I read:

“The prophets and apostles did not perfect Christian character by a miracle. They used the means that God placed within their reach, and all who will put forth the same effort will secure the same results”
Sanctified Life, page 84.

This doesn't mean that it is without God. How did John get changed from selfishness to love, from angry temper to meekness? Not by a direct miracle in the sense that something happened like that. Oh, no. It was the power of God working with John's efforts, his choices. Over and over again John must choose.

What about Paul? Did Paul have any problems? He says:

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” 1 Corinthians 9:27.

“I die daily” 1 Corinthians 15:31.

Think of it. Every day Paul, as he consulted his inclinations, would have gone the wrong way. So if I wait until God changes my feelings so there is heavenly love in my heart, I will wait too long. Praise God, He will give me the power to live His life as I read His word, as I search the Scriptures, and as I put my will on His side.

That is not righteousness by works. That is righteousness by faith, because faith is believing God. And if we believe God we will do what He says.

This does not mean that all we have is the working of natural law. If Jesus had to wait until they grew the food, or until His disciples had gone to the villages and bought food, it would not have been what He saw the people needed. So God gave Him the power to work a miracle. God will in an emergency help us to work miracles when He sees it is for our good. When He sees it will make us kind and loving instead of lazy and selfish.

“God does not generally work miracles to advance His truth. If the husbandman neglects to cultivate the soil, God works no miracle to counteract the sure results. God works according to great principles made known to us, and it is our part to mature wise plans and set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results”
Christian Service, page 228.

Suppose last year my garden didn't produce, and this year I say I am going to do something different. I am going to just pray. So the time I used to use out in the garden I get down and pray. Would that be a good substitution? No, it wouldn't. You all see how foolish that would be. We must not think that if we are foolish in health habits or spiritual things, someday God is going to do something for us suddenly that will take the place of our learning how to live spiritually, mentally and physically in harmony with His laws.

I am so glad that God has given us these great principles. One of the greatest reasons God wants us in agriculture is because we learn these principles as we work with the soil. One of the great reasons He wants us in medical missionary work is that we see the laws of sowing and reaping in human lives as well as in the garden. We see that the man who smokes will eventually get lung cancer or have a heart attack. We see that the people who live according to the Spirit of Prophecy

diet program live on the average six years longer than people who don't. We are learning as we follow out these principles and work with God the great laws of sowing and reaping.

But remember, God does not want us to rule out miracles. He wants us to get ready for the latter rain and the loud cry. Even now from time to time God interposes and steps in to heal the sick or some other miracle.

How many have found in your life you know is a direct miracle? Thank God. So my lesson tonight has two sides. Let's rejoice in these miracles and want more and more. The other is to remember that the greatest evidence that God is working is not necessarily what we call miracles. It is helping to do according to His will day by day.

Jesus was carrying out His Father's plan just as much in the carpenter shop at Nazareth as He was healing the sick or raising the dead. And He wants us to follow His example.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father” John 14:12.

We are still going to school with Jesus at Nazareth. Let's be good apprentices. What do you say? Let's learn to be faithful and dependable. Let's learn to be on time. Let's learn to turn out a good produce, whether it is in the kitchen or the farm or the shop or the treatment room. Let's learn in our work to be as perfect as possible. And remember, ahead of us is that glorious latter rain and loud cry which will be like Jesus' public ministry. If we will learn these lessons God entrusts to us, those mighty miracles will be on time. I want both.

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