

Experiencing God’s Miracles

Romans 8:1-8 NASB

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

The word “miracle” does not appear in the above, yet this text tells an astounding wonder.

In the 1960s, an elderly Hollywood woman told me of two miraculous healings she experienced.

Though she repeatedly mentioned those marvels, she didn’t act as if they affected her outlook.



Disappointment in her son and a recent illness depressed her.

Whether God actually performed miracles earlier in this woman’s life, I cannot say.

I knew little of her background.

She provided no witnesses or documentation.

Over time, people in similar circumstances have spoken to me of “miracles” in their lives. As do apples, miracles come in various types.

Our text refers to events that astounded Paul.

Paul considered them miraculous.

His realization of what God did forced him to his knees in worship.

When we look through lenses that Paul used, we’ll see miracles, too.

Of course, miracles come in different types.

Walking along the beach many years ago, John tripped over a half-buried kerosene lantern.

He rubbed its side and, sure enough, a genie materialized.

"I can't grant your wishes," explained the freed spirit. "But I'll give you three gifts for releasing me.

- 1. A potion to cure ill health,**
- 2. A very large diamond,**
- 3. A dinner date with a famous movie star.**

By tomorrow afternoon, you will receive all these gifts."

When John returned home from work the next evening, he excitedly asked his mother if anything had been delivered.

"Yes," she replied. "It's been an unusual day.

- At 2 p.m., a 55-gallon drum of chicken soup arrived.**
- About a half-hour later, a telegram came saying that a long-lost relative had left you a minor-league baseball stadium.**
- Ten minutes ago, MGM called inviting you to dinner with Lassie tonight."¹**



Paul didn't look for miracles like the guy in this silly story or even the type some of my acquaintances sought.

Yet the miracles he saw astounded him.

Why should you be interested about Paul?

¹ Contributed by Steve Keuchel "Laughter, the Best Medicine," Reader's Digest

1. You and I can experience the same kind of miracles Paul did.

Note this important fact:

Paul did not begin his career as a nice guy.

To the contrary, Paul confessed:

"Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me..."²

- The first time the Bible refers to Paul, he took part in an illegal assembly.**
- The event resembled an old-style lynching party.**
- A mob of men took justice into its own hands.**
- Paul was clearly an accomplice.³**

When we read next about Paul (Acts 8), he did more than just watch a killing.

He ravaged the church: "entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison."⁴

What kind of person would go into the homes of innocent people, drag mothers and fathers away from their children, and haul them to jail?

- This resembles what Gestapo agents did in Europe prior to and during World War II.**

² Ephesians 3:8 NIV

³ See Acts 6, 7

⁴ Acts 8:3

Acts chapter 9 reveals more about Paul.

"He breathed threats and murder against" people.

- **To early Christians, Paul's name became as notorious as Osama bin Laden's name to us.**
But Paul became a Christian and was baptized for the forgiveness of his wrongs.
- **Once he became a believer, he couldn't forget what he had done.**

Ten or 15 years later, he wrote to the Corinth church:

"I am the least of all the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God."⁵

Later to the churches in Galatia:

"I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it."⁶

Paul never forgot his earlier hateful actions.

That God would save him, Paul deemed miraculous.

Paul wasn't last person to experience miracles.

**When I look at the wretchedness of my mind,
the vileness of my thoughts,
my scheming, plotting,
and the emptiness I have felt at times,
I marvel that God would save me.**

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:9 NIV

⁶ Galatian 1:13 NIV

Have you done things for which you wonder whether God can forgive you?

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

**What a wonderfully merciful God we serve.
He accepts us and loves us in spite of our pretense, vileness, and anger.**

Miracles still occur, don't they?

Sir James Y. Simpson, M.D. (The Discoverer of "Chloroform" wrote:

When I was a boy at school I saw a sight I never can forget—a man tied to a cart and dragged before the people's eyes, through the streets of my native town, his back torn and bleeding from the lash. It was a shameful punishment. For many offenses? No; for one offense.

Did any of the townsmen offer to divide the lashes with him? No; he who committed the offense bore the penalty all alone. It was the penalty of human law.

When I was a student at the university, I saw another sight I never can forget—a man brought out to die. His arms were pinioned, his face was already pale as death—thousands of eager eyes were on him as he came from the jail.



Did any man ask to die in his room? Did any friend come and loose the rope and say, **"Put it round my neck, I will die instead?"**

No; he underwent the sentence of the law. For many offenses? No; for one offense. He had stolen a money parcel from a stagecoach. He broke the law at one point and died for it.

I saw another sight—it matters not, when—myself, a sinner standing on the brink of ruin, deserving naught but hell. For sin? No; for many, many sins committed against the unchanging laws of God. But again I looked and saw *Jesus*, my Substitute, scourged in my stead, and dying on the cross for me. I looked, and cried, and was forgiven!”

**“His grace, His blood, His righteousness,
This is my only plea;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”**

**“Therefore there is now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

Second, God uses sinful people like Paul—like I am—to demonstrate his power in the Church.

**This happens as we in Christ’s church
confess our wrongs, pray for one another,
and share Jesus’ good news.**

“Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was . . . through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”⁷

**Richard and Cyndi Chowning
worshiped with us at the church of
Christ in Hollywood while on
furlough from their African mission
work.**



**They filed this “Report from Sotik,
Kenya East Africa” June 27, 1984.**

- **Evangelists from new congregations told how God had brought the drunk, sick and helpless in their villages out of the darkness of sin into Christ’s light. One new evangelist confessed, “My neighbors are still keeping an eye on me because of the rage I used to display in the community. I have had a bad reputation, but now that I am a Christian, with the power of God, I hope to be a witness for the loving God. Pray for me.”**

⁷ Ephesians 3:8-10 NIV

- **Another new Christian and now a preacher of the Word, asked fellow evangelists for their prayers. “All these words are still new to me. Even the church is new in our village. Many are still where I was—in sin. I hurt for them, and I want you to pray for them, and I want you to pray that I can teach them about Christ.”**

The miracle of God’s grace still happens wherever people are willing to confess sin and open their hearts to God’s love.

First miracle is God’s forgiveness in Christ.

2. The second type of miracle is when God uses sinful people like Paul—like I am—to demonstrate his powerful love.

“this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,”
God planned for the church to actively demonstrate His grace.

3. See Christ’s forgiving mercy and love work in human hearts.

Though born a Jew, Paul became a specialist in evangelizing gentiles.

Paul ignored the things in which we take pride.

Because he was highly educated, he could have taken pride in his schooling.

He likely came from an influential family—equal to what some once called *bluebloods*.

He boasted only in Christ.

Instead, he humbly confessed he was the foremost of sinners.

One of the greatest miracles in Christ is how His church grows.

Corporations try to build confidence in their corporate image.

They want people to know how solid they are.

In contrast, the greatest demonstrations of God’s power occur when Christians confess their unworthiness and sin, not when they brag about their goodness.



Note this additional part of the Chowning’s Kenya report:

“The most inspiring meeting of leaders of the church in Kipsigis took place the last week of April. Evangelists confessed their sins, recounted the power of God in their lives, and made plans for growth in the church.”

“Over ninety Kipsigis preachers of the Word gathered at Meswando. They were joined by a dozen from North Kalenjin. Many confessed that they had not been doing their best at planting churches. Other work around home and long trips had forced evangelism down on their list priorities. Some confessed sins of the flesh and others a lack of faith.”

Did the church fall apart

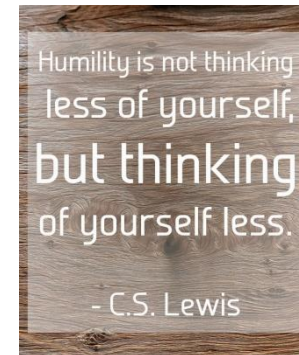
following these admissions of wrong?

“After each confession the entire assembly prayed. The church had grown by close to 20% in the previous twelve months. Stories of victories by Christ were prevalent.”

**God wants us to focus on the miracle of His forgiveness in Christ,
follow His will,
lovingly proclaim Jesus' resurrection,
and wait for God's Judgment.**

We can know the same kind of miracles Paul did.

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”



Praise God for his merciful love!

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