

Signs and Wonders - Acts 9:31-43
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

It's probably a good thing to have a good bit of skepticism when we see a guy on TV or the internet holding a healing crusade, laying hands on people who then fall backward and arise healed of various ailments. There is plenty of documentation that these guys are false teachers who do fake miracles. Yet, this produces another problem for our faith, as we can look at the healing miracles in the Bible with the same skepticism. For some, they just reject the supernatural stories in the Bible as little more than embellished stories seeking to turn ordinary people in the Bible into personalities that are bigger than life. Yet, the evidence of eyewitnesses to these events is actually very strong, meaning that there is verifiable evidence that these events actually took place. Take the stories here in Acts written by doctor Luke. These are not fake miracles about people with made-up ailments written by a gullible author. Both stories are of people whose sickness had been verified to the point of hopelessness. One was paralyzed for eight years, the other dead. And after Peter reached them in the name of Jesus they were alive, healed, and well. Still, even those of us who believe these things did happen struggle to make sense of them and apply these stories in the present. We may believe that Jesus used to heal, but not so much any more. So the question that this and other stories raises is this, "Does Jesus still heal people today?" And if so, why haven't I seen this sort of thing happen?

In the sermon this week my definitive answer to the first question is, "Yes!" Jesus does still heal people, and heal them miraculously. And yes, I know of stories, some that I have heard word of mouth or in print, and some that I have observed where God has healed people from ailments and diseases. But to understand what is happening in Scripture and to properly understand the story we need to wrestle with the reason Jesus heals people, both in the Scriptures and also in history. So, I will share four key reasons for the healing miracles in the Bible, which will help us understand how to apply these miracles in our time.

The first reason we see these miracles is that God chooses to verify and vindicate His prophets with the sending of signs and wonders. As we read the Scriptures there are pockets of time where miracles increase significantly as they are clustered around the ministry of specific people. These periods include the ministry of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus (of course), and the book of Acts. In all of these cases God sends people who represent Him and who come speaking and writing the very Word of God. We see this with Moses from Exodus 3&4 and the story of the Burning Bush. After speaking with God and being told he is being sent by God, Moses has a basic question. Why would the people believe that I am speaking for You? God tells him that Moses is to use his staff as proof, and that God will send signs and wonders through Moses to authenticate his message as being not his own but from God Himself. This purpose reaches its apex in the ministry of Jesus, as he heals myriads of people from every possible issue and ailment, including the healing of the blind and raising the dead. The miracles vindicate the claim that He is God and His speech is the very Word of God. As part of His ministry Jesus discipled and then commissioned the Twelve Apostles and also saves and raises up Paul as an Apostle and sends them to proclaim the Gospel with the authority of Jesus. In other words, they too speak and write with the authority of Jesus, and we are to receive their message as the very Word of God. So, this is where we have to be careful. We now have the Bible, the record of God's speech and acts written down for us by the prophets and apostles, and this record was completed in the ministry of Jesus. And the Bible is self-authenticating, it is a miracle in and of itself, and nothing is to be added to it nor taken from it. While this is a bit of a complex argument, here is the big point. God no longer needs to send signs and wonders to authenticate his messengers to prove they speak the very Word of God. The proof that someone is speaking God's Word is simple, are they proclaiming Jesus from the pages of Scripture. So we should not expect clusters of miracles

around a specific person who is also making the claim that the miracles prove they authenticity of their message. In fact, if they are making this claim that is a first proof that they are false prophets, and we should run away.

Yet, this is not the only reason God sends healing miracles. These miracles are also acts of Divine love and grace to hurting people and communities, signs of His mercy and care. Healings also inspire awe and faith in Jesus, as these two stories indicate. Yet, we also need to be careful because there is a danger here. Miracles in themselves are never sufficient for true belief. They may point people in the right direction, but people will still need to repent and believe in Jesus. Way too often people get fixated on the gift of healing and not on Christ the Healer. Finally, healings glorifies the God who is our ultimate healer. So, while God no longer needs to send miracles to authenticate His message, there is no reason to believe that God no longer heals for the reasons indicated in this paragraph. We should pray in faith, asking God to heal us and heal others around us. And then we should trust Jesus with the outcome. Because if we know Christ and He does not heal our diseases, we have hope in an ultimate healing in the resurrection, and we know that God is good in all our circumstances.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Jeremiah 51 | Jeremiah 52 | 1 Kings 1 | 1 Kings 2 | 1 Kings 3 | 1 Kings 4 | 1 Kings 5 |

Reading from this past week: Acts 9:31-43

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 10:1-11:18

Family Worship

Song - *Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery*

<https://youtu.be/h-xQDm-KZw8>

Gospel Project

Unit: King David

Story: God chose David to be king.

Big Picture Question: What is grace?

Answer: Grace is when God gives us something good even when we do not deserve it.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16

New City Catechism

Question #27: Are all people, just as they were lost through Adam, saved through Christ?

Answer: No, only those who are elected by God and united to Christ by faith.

Verse: Romans 5:17

Scripture

Acts 9:31-43

- As you read these two miracle healing stories, what in the story speaks to you?
- Have you ever experienced healing or known someone who was healed of an ailment or disease?
- How would you answer the question, "Does Jesus still heal people?"
- Why should our practice include praying for people who are sick and struggling, asking God to heal them and believing He can?

Prayer

*Pray for our Ecuador mission team as they prepare to leave on Friday.

*Pray for the Augustine Heights neighborhood

*Ask God to bring healing to those who are sick in our church.