



TRANSFORMING TRUTH

Trends deceive. Traditions enslave. God's Truth transforms.

“The Existing Tension”

From the Series,
“MiraculoUS”

Various Scriptures
Preached Sunday 1/11/15
Meadow Baptist Church

1. The Burning Question

Should we expect supernatural, miraculous activity accomplished by God today?

3 Primary Views

- a. No, all supernatural activity ceased somewhere around the end of the first century
- b. Yes, but these miracles/supernatural moments are extremely rare and accomplished by a sovereign God at times and in occasional moments of His choosing. These miracles should not be expected nor sought by present day believers.
- c. Yes, the entirety of the Christian experience and the entire Church Age is characterized in part by the availability and the reality of miraculous/supernatural activity accomplished by God through His children.

2. Our Need to Understand the Opposite View

- a. Those who are reluctant to believe in the miraculous/supernatural:
 - i. Believe that God can (and occasionally may) work the supernatural and miraculous
 - ii. Believe strongly in the objective element of God’s word above the subjective element of the supernatural

- iii. Hold a concern that personal experience runs the risk of being exalted over eternal truth
 - iv. Most believe that the book of Acts is a historical/transitional book revealing what took place in the early church and does not establish nor demand that a necessary view of the same supernatural works continuing throughout the church age
 - v. Hold a deep concern over the abuses and errors in the personal lives and ministries of those who subscribe to the supernatural view
 - vi. Import their lack of personal miraculous/supernatural experience into their final conclusions
- b. Those who are active in believing or eager to believe in the miraculous/supernatural:
- i. See no doctrinal/theological difference between what was granted to the early church and what is granted to the present day church
 - ii. Believe strongly that God's objective word clearly validates the reality of the miraculous & supernatural
 - iii. Hold a concern that those who discount the miraculous & supernatural reduce the Christian life to an intellectual or doctrinal exercise
 - iv. Hold a deep concern that to deny the ongoing supernatural & miraculous activity of God and His people violates the principle of not taking away anything from the Scripture. What do we do with all of the bible passages about the supernatural if it is no longer a relevant issue?
 - v. Hold a concern over the apparent lack of joy, love, power and transformed lives from the ministries of those who do not believe in the miraculous & supernatural
 - vi. Like those on the opposite side of the issue, these also import their personal experiences with the supernatural into their final conclusions

3. Our Call to Humility, Unity & Love

"I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts. The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O LORD; teach me Your statutes." - Psalm 119:63-64

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." - Ephesians 4:1-3

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." - John 13:34-35

SUPPORT/UNPACKED VERSES

1. From Those Who Are Skeptical About the Ongoing Nature of the Miraculous & Supernatural

- a. Wasn't the Miraculous Nature of Life & Ministry Reserved To Jesus & The Apostles?

Acts 2:22 - "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know."

Acts 2:43 - "And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles."

Acts 5:12-13 - "Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico."

Acts 14:3 - "So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

Acts 15:12 - "And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles."

2 Cor 12:12 - "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works."

Rom 15:18-19 - "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;"

Heb 2:3-4 - "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

b. No Parallel in Church History

One final argument from church history is that there has never been anyone that we know of that regularly healed people the way Jesus and the apostles did— instantly, completely, and the hardest cases. Most healing since the days of the apostles deals in the easier cases, fails often, and does not happen instantly. This does not mean it is unreal, only that it is of a different order than the signs and wonders of Jesus and the apostles. So for reasons like these, one group of evangelicals says that signs and wonders ceased as a normative part of the ministry when the apostles finished their work. We should not pursue them today.

2. From Those Who Affirm the Ongoing Nature of the Miraculous & Supernatural

Those who subscribe to this view say that the church should be experiencing those elements of the faith which are miraculous/supernatural. Their position is that the miraculous & supernatural are given both for the blessing of the church and for the spread of the gospel. Here are some of the reasons this view demands serious consideration.

a. Continuity between Jesus' Ministry and the Church's

Jesus does seem to teach a continuity between his own ministry and the ongoing ministry of the church.

John 20:21 - "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."

Luke 9:1-2 - "And He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal."

Luke 10:8-9 - "Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." The preaching of the kingdom seems to be very closely linked with the ministry of healing.

John 14:12-14 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." (Notice that Jesus delegates His works to all those who believe in Him)

Mark 16:17-18 - "And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So the first piece of evidence is that Jesus seems to teach a continuity between his ministry and the ministry of the church. He does not say, "Make miraculous/supernatural works part of the ministry while I am here, but not after I am gone."

b. Signs and Wonders Done in Acts by Non-Apostles

The book of Acts also reveals that it is not just the apostles who do signs and wonders. Two "deacons"—two of the seven chosen in Acts 6, Stephen and Philip, also perform miraculous/supernatural works as part of their ministries. Note: This Philip of Acts 8:6-7 cannot be the same Philip who was one of the original twelve because Acts 6:1-6 distinguishes the men chosen to serve as "deacons" from the original 12 who could not leave their apostolic responsibilities to serve tables.

Acts 6:8-9 - "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people."

Acts 8:6-7 - "And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed."

Also revealing that this Philip was not the same Philip of the original 12 is that, after his ministry time in Samaria, the apostles Peter & John, came down and laid their hands on the Samaritans so that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17). This means that Philip was not acting as an apostle when he earlier performed miraculous/supernatural ministry in Samaria. He was a non-apostle who possessed miracle-working power in his evangelistic ministry.

Galatians 3:5- "Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?"

God is now supplying working miracles among the Galatian Christians (not only to the apostles) while Paul is not there among them. The working of miracles clearly is not limited to the ministry of the apostles in the early church.

c. Gifts of Healing and Miracles

Finally, the fourth piece of evidence is that in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul teaches that in the church there were gifts of healing and miracles for various believers not just for the apostles.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 - "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

Then in verse 28 he distinguishes this from the apostolate when he says, "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings . . ."

So it seems pretty clear that there were gifts of healings and miracles that were not limited to the apostles.

Conclusion: So because of these verses and many other passages, some believers affirm that signs and wonders were not limited to the apostles or to that age, but are available for today and should be sought for the good of the church and the spread of the gospel.