



# Bible & Life

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### **Miracles, Faith, and the Book of Acts**

Compiled from the writings of William MacDonald

In studying the book of Acts the question naturally arises, "Should we expect the same miracles today?" There are two extremes to be avoided in answering this question. The first is the position that since Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we should be seeing the same miracles that were found in the early church in the book of Acts. The other extreme is that miracles and the wonderful providence of God were only for the early days of the church and we have no right to look for them today.

#### **The Necessity of the Supernatural in Our Lives**

It is true that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). But that does not mean that divine methods never change. The plagues God used in Egypt, for instance, have never been repeated. The blowing of trumpets, shouting, and marching wrought a great victory at Jericho, but it was never used again. His power is the same. He can still perform any kind of miracle. But that does not mean that He must perform the same miracles in every age.

On the other hand, we should not wave miracles aside as not being for the church age. It is all too easy to assign miracles to dispensational pigeonholes and content ourselves with lives that never rise above flesh and blood. The fact of the matter is that our lives should be charged with supernatural power. God wants men and women whose lives are completely turned over to the control of the Holy Spirit. We should be constantly seeing God's hand in the marvelous converging of circumstances. We should be experiencing His guidance in a miraculous, marvelous way. We should experience events in our lives that lie beyond the laws of probability. We should be aware that God is arranging contacts, opening doors, overruling opposition. As someone has said, "Our service should crackle with the supernatural."

Moreover, we should be seeing direct answers to prayer. When our lives touch other lives, we should be seeing something happening for God. We should see His hand in automobile breakdowns, travel delays, accidents, financial losses, and other seeming tragedies. We should experience extraordinary deliverances and possess strength, courage, peace, and wisdom beyond our natural limits.

If our lives are lived only on the natural level, how are we any different from non-Christians? God's will is that our lives should be supernatural, that the life of Jesus Christ should stream out of us. When

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**William  
MacDonald**  
(1917-2007)

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this takes place, impossibilities will melt, closed doors will open, and power will surge. Then, as has been said, “We will be radioactive with the Holy Spirit and when men get near us, they will feel the sparks of the Spirit.”

### **Miracles and the Necessity of Faith**

There can be no true work of God in our lives without unquestioning faith in the living God. He who would do exploits for God must first trust him implicitly. “All God’s giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them.” —**Hudson Taylor**

Now true faith is always based upon some promise of God, some portion of His Word. This is important. The believer first reads or hears some promise of the Lord. The Holy Spirit takes that promise and applies it to his heart and conscience in a very personal way. The Christian becomes aware that God has spoken to him directly. With utter confidence in the trustworthiness of the One who has promised, he reckons the promise as sure as if it were already fulfilled, even though, humanly speaking, it is impossible.

Or perhaps it is a commandment rather than a promise. To faith, there is no difference. If God commands, He enables. If He bids Peter to walk on the water, Peter can be sure that the needed power will be given (Matthew 14:28). If He commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, we can be sure of the needed grace (Mark 16:15). Faith does not work in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends. “The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and where sight and sense fail.” —**George Muller** Faith says, “If ‘impossible’ is the only objection, it can be done!”

“Faith brings God into the scene, and therefore, it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties—yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgment of faith, God is the grand answer to every question—the grand solution to every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence it matters not in the least to faith whether it be six hundred (dollars) or six hundred million; it knows that God is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, ‘How can such and such a thing be?’ It is full of ‘hows’; but faith has great answers to ten thousand ‘hows’ and the answer is —God.” —**C. H. Mackintosh**

Humanly speaking, it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child. But God had promised, and to Abraham there was only one impossibility—that God could lie.

*He against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, “So shall thy seed be.” And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform (Romans 4:18-21).*

Our God is the God who specializes in impossibilities (Luke 1:37). There is nothing too hard for Him (Genesis 18:14). “The things which are

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*“Attempt  
great  
things for  
God,  
believe  
great  
things  
from God,  
ask great  
things of  
God.”*

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**J. Hudson Taylor**  
(1832-1905)

*Pioneer missionary to China and  
founder of China Inland Mission,  
now known as OMF Int’l.*

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impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). Faith claims His promise "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23); and exults with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

### **The Reasonableness of Faith**

Because faith deals with the supernatural and the divine, it does not always seem to be "reasonable." It was not using common sense for Abraham to go out, not knowing where he was going, but simply obeying God's command (Hebrews 11:8). It was not "shrewd" of Joshua to attack Jericho without death-dealing weapons (Joshua 6:1-20). Men of the world would scoff at such "insanity." But it worked! The faith that enables one to walk with God also enables him to attach the proper values to the mockery and scoffing of men.

Actually, faith is most reasonable. What is more reasonable than that a creature should trust his Creator? Is it insane to believe in One who can neither lie nor fail nor err? To trust God is the most sensible, sane, rational thing that a man can do. It is no leap in the dark. Faith demands the surest evidence and finds it in God's unfailing Word. No one has ever trusted Him in vain; no one ever will. Faith in the Lord involves no risk whatsoever.

Faith truly glorifies God; it gives Him His proper place as the One who is completely trustworthy. On the other hand, unbelief dishonors God; it charges Him with lying (1 John 5:10). It "limits the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41). Faith gives man his proper place also—as a humble suppliant, bowed in the dust before the sovereign Lord of all.

Faith is opposed to sight. Paul reminded us that "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). To walk by sight means to have visible means of support, to have adequate reserves for the future, to employ human cleverness in insuring against unseen risks. The walk of faith is the very opposite; it is a moment by moment reliance on God alone. It is a perpetual crisis of dependence on the Lord. The flesh shrinks from a position of complete dependence on an unseen God. It seeks to provide a cushion against possible losses. If the flesh cannot see where it is going, it is apt to suffer complete nervous collapse. But faith steps forward in obedience to the Word of God, rises above circumstances, and trusts the Lord for the supply of all needs.

### **The Testing of the Life of Faith**

Any disciple who determines to walk by faith can be sure that his faith will be tested. Sooner or later, he will be brought to the end of his human resources. In his extremity, he will be tempted to appeal to his fellow men. If he is really trusting the Lord, he will look to God alone. "To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him."—**C. H. Mackintosh**

This New Testament pattern is largely neglected in Christian circles today. Highly organized solicitation is the rule, not the exception. It has reached such bizarre proportions that the world looks on and says, "All the church wants is your money." The first and foremost argument against such practice is that it does not have any scriptural support. The

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*"The life of faith is to walk with God; to cling to Him; to lean on Him; to draw from His exhaustless springs; to find all our resources in Him and a satisfying object for our hearts — to know Him as our only resource in all difficulties, and in all our trials. It is to be absolutely, completely, and continually shut up to Him; to be undividedly dependent upon Him, apart from and above every human hope, and every earthly expectation."*

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**C. H. Mackintosh**  
(1820-1896)

*from article "Living by Faith"*

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apostles never made their needs known to others. They did make the needs of others known. I make a distinction between information and solicitation. I feel it is legitimate to inform people as to what God is doing, but your motives must be pure. We must not be secretly or indirectly looking to men rather than God. Corrie ten Boom has aptly said, "I would rather be the trusting child of a rich Father, than a beggar at the door of worldly men."

The normal attitude of a disciple is to desire an increase in his faith (Luke 17:5). He has already trusted Christ for salvation. Now he seeks to extend the areas of his life which are submitted to the Lord's control. As he faces sickness, trials, tragedies, and bereavements, he comes to know God in a new and more intimate way, and his faith is strengthened. He proves the truth of the promise. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3). The more he finds God to be trustworthy, the more anxious he is to trust Him for greater things.

## Conclusion

In the life of faith, there is always room for advancement. When we read of what has been accomplished through faith, we realize that we are like little children, playing at the edge of a vast and boundless ocean. Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, the disciple's desire should be to saturate himself in the Scriptures—to read them, study them, memorize them, meditate upon them day and night. They are his chart and compass, his guide and comfort, his lamp and light. The life of faith is a grand reality. Many are missing a great blessing of God. God delights in men and women of faith and is glorified by their lives. There is nothing in this entire world that so gratifies and glorifies Him as the life of faith.

**William MacDonald (1917-2007)** - He served the Lord for over 60 years in both preaching, writing, and in discipleship. He served as the president of Emmaus Bible College from 1959-1965. He may be best known for his writing ministry. He has written over 84 books, booklets, and tracts. This newsletter was compiled from the books—*The Acts: Dynamic Christianity* (1975), *True Discipleship* (1975), and *The Disciple's Manual* (2004).