

God of miracles

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[0 : 00] It has to be here again. Seems like just this morning. Mark chapter 9. Oh! Mark chapter 9 and verse 14.

I want to talk about the God of miracles this evening. I was praying about what to talk about this evening and briefly, this is a talk that could go on for several weeks, but it won't, I promise. Yes. And what I'm going to do is I'm going to just talk about the God of miracles for a little while and then just give testimonies probably overstating it, but just a few examples of miracles that I've known in my life.

Because sometimes it's just fun, isn't it, to share the miracles that we know because the truth is that we miss some of them. And then after that, there will be an opportunity for you to receive prayer and laying on of hands.

So that's where we're heading for the next little while. So, Mark chapter 9 and verse 14.

[1 : 05] When they came to the other disciples, so they've been, two groups and they've been separated slightly, they saw a loud crowd around them and the teacher of the law arguing with them.

As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. What are you arguing about? He asked. A man in the crowd answered, Teacher, I brought you my son who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.

Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground, he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.

You unbelieving generation, Jesus replied. How long shall I put up with you? Sorry, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me. So they brought him.

When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, How long has he been like this?

[2 : 11] From childhood, he answered, It had often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us. If you can, said Jesus, everything is possible for one who believes.

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief. Immediately the boy's father, I'm sorry, when Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit.

You deaf and mute spirit, he said, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again. The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and he came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that they said, He's dead.

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet. And he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, Why couldn't we drive it out? He replied, This kind can only come out by prayer.

Lots and lots in that, but I just want to pick up some points. Next slide, please, Josh. Miracles are part of God, of who God is. And one of the things that we miss out on is if we don't believe that.

[3 : 29] If we don't believe that miracles are just part of who God is, we turn them into some sort of extraordinary event that happens almost never, or some sort of magic show, and it's neither of that.

We need to understand the person of God. Throughout Scripture, we see countless examples of our miracle-working God at work.

Old and New Testament. And you see things and you think, Goodness me! And it's quite extraordinary as you read Scripture, if we read it carefully, and go miracle-spotting, how many miracles there are, and how much God acts in his authoritative, powerful way to change the course of people's lives.

And we've just heard from Rob how God changed his life in power. The Gospels are full of the miracles of Jesus, from turning water into wine to healing demon-possessed children. to raising Lazarus from the dead, to whatever, whatever. And so we can, and we should, pray for them and expect miracles.

[4 : 58] Part of our life and our lifestyle in Jesus needs to be to pray for miracles and expect miracles. But there's a health warning here.

Miracles are a gift from God. We can't and we mustn't demand a miracle. We can pray fervently. We can cry out to God.

And there are times when I have cried out to God on my own or with others for intervention, for change. And that's good. But if we get into sulky stamping of feet when we pray for a miracle, then we're misunderstanding who God is.

And we're misunderstanding his power and his almighty wisdom that we need to ensure that we don't misunderstand.

And miracles are supernatural. Miracles are things that don't make sense to the laws of nature, the laws of physics. They're from God.

[6 : 09] They are outside of our ability. And there's a danger here, and there's a danger, I think, in Western churches where we hear of people who say, I perform this sort of miracle.

I am gifted in this sort of miracle. Well, I worry about that. And I worry about it because this is not about some sort of course you go on to be a miracle worker.

This is about us being the conduit through God, through which God performs his astonishing work. So I suppose that we need to understand the nature of miracles, and there's books called miracles that are a lot longer than that.

So that's a sort of brief potted version of it. Next slide, please, Josh. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have the power together with all of the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

[7 : 26] and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever.

Amen. Ephesians chapter 3, that lovely, lovely final doctology there. Now to him. But if we look at that passage, what we need to really see there is the grasp and the know.

We need to grasp and know. And that means we need to be in relationship with Jesus and we need to have that diligence to work at the relationship.

So we know what's going on. We can understand. Not because we're clever, but because God tells us. So we need to know God.

Next slide please. Jim Packer wrote a book called Knowing God. Quite a good idea really. But even this is an interesting quote here. We are cruel to ourselves if we try and live in this world without knowing about God, whose world it is and who runs it.

[8 : 56] The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place and life in it is a disappointing and unpleasant business for those who do not know God. Disregard the study of God and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you.

This way you can waste your life and lose your soul. We are cruel to ourselves if we try and live in this world without knowing God.

Which is quite a powerful thing to say and something that we can say, yeah, we understand that we need to know God. We can understand that we need to know Him because we want to know more about Him.

But this is actually about it's bad for us not to know God. It's bad for us not to know God. And the passage in Ephesians that I read a few minutes ago is all about grasping that, all about taking hold of that, all about knowing, knowing because we know.

So let's go to the next slide, please, Josh. God can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. It's a lovely phrase, a lovely verse, that lovely concept.

[10:18] What can I ask God for? And whatever I ask God for, He can do more. Not just a bit more, immeasurably more. He can excel and way exceed our expectations.

Nothing is impossible. Everything is possible for one who believes. And Jesus was quite sort of straightforward. If He can, what do you mean if He can?

Of course I can. I'm Jesus. But doubt is real as well. And there's a beautiful reality in this passage that I personally love very much.

It's a beautiful reality of Jesus sort of rebukes him, certainly says, what are you talking about? If I can. And the Father immediately comes back and says, I know, I know you can.

I know you can. Help me overcome my unbelief. I know you can, Lord. I really get it. I know that you can. But there's something in me that's just not quite sure.

[11:28] It's a contradiction, but it's an honest contradiction. And so when we're talking about miracles, when we're crying out to God, when in a few minutes we pray for each other, then we need to be really honest about, do I really, am I sure on this one?

I know God can do all sorts of miracles. But what about for me? What about for me in my situation? Oh Lord, help me overcome my unbelief.

A really honest cry to God. And trust is really, really important. Trust is essential. We need to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know that this love surpasses knowledge.

We can sing the song in Sunday school or we can sing the song in church. My God is so big, so strong and so mighty there's nothing my God cannot do for boom.

All right? You can sing it and we know it. Do we believe it? Do we grasp it? Have we got it within us?

[12:50] Because all this is part of worshipping a God of miracles. and as we ask God to change things in our lives, change in things in other people's lives, change things in the world, we need to do it from a place of knowing God and of knowing that He can because He's big and powerful and authoritative.

Now what I want to do just in two or three minutes is to not give my testimony because my testimony is not particularly interesting. I grew up in a Christian household and became a Christian. They are. It's a bit more complicated than that but not much more complicated. But I want to talk about some miracles and I just thought it would be interesting for a moment just to some miracles I have known.

Here's a bit. Healing. I have known a number of times where God has healed people when I have prayed for them.

I have known when I have been healed when God when somebody has prayed for me. And I've told this story before but it bears repeating. I was once asked to go and pray with a little boy.

[14:04] His father rang me in tears. This little boy was months old and they said he's deaf. The doctors have said he's deaf. And I went around to pray with them and I sat in the car and I said to God I can't do this.

This family are distressed and distraught. And I thought I've got to go in. So I said to God you're best coming with me. And I prayed for him and I went away. And then a few a couple of weeks later I got a phone call saying we've just been to the hospital.

The doctor said his hearing is perfect. Now was that a marble in his ear or was it God performing a miracle? I choose to believe it's God performing a miracle.

We had a lovely man called Michael from the Sudan in a house group that we ran. And he came one day and said will you pray because there was a conflict there still is a conflict between South and North Sudan.

And his town was being held under siege. and he said there's no food left and it's really desperate when you pray for my town my family my the people that I know and love.

[15:20] And so he said yeah we will. And I if I'm really honest prayed a sort of God bless Sudan prayer. But we prayed and I went to bed and the next morning I put the news on and not the first item on the news but three or four in it said a a rescue mission an aid mission has airdropped a load of food into the town in Sudan that we prayed for.

And I just went what? Is that right? Did it happen? Is it real? Yeah it's real. We sat in a house in North Leeds and prayed for a country frankly I'm not entirely sure I could pinpoint on a map for a town within that country that I have no idea what it's called for a man that we didn't know very well

and who went back to Sudan soon afterwards and God said yeah okay I'll do that.
I've known miracles around time and diaries busyness becoming less busy work that should take two hours taking 25 minutes things that just don't make sense just unraveling to make sense I've known trains that have run on time no really I have yeah not very often but I have pray for car parking pray for car parking it's great fun praying for car parking and you can say oh that's just sap and stance well I'm not so sure it was I needed to park outside church this morning I had Christine in the car didn't want her to get to didn't want to have problem parking car park outside space outside that doesn't happen that doesn't happen except it does resolution of conflict where you see a situation a conflictual situation in a family in a relationship in a community pray for peace pray for calm pray for resolution and God just says okay okay why?
because he can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine we sang earlier all my life you have been faithful for truth be told sometimes I've not really known or thought about that truth be told there are times when I've been really really close to that understanding but whether I'm far away or close in all my life God has been faithful the God of miracle the God of power the God of authority has been faithful so we need to get used to praying we need to get used to praying for and believing for miracles we need to be a church who will understand that this is where we come together as a family to pray for miracles and we need to broadcast that truth to those in the community who don't yet know him because the biggest miracle is when a new believer enters the kingdom of God will be told to to to to to to!