

The Power of God's Word

Introduction

- *How would you feel if I told you that I could give you the ability to perform miracles?*

Overview of signs, wonders and miracles...

Definitions:

- A 'sign' (Gr. 'σημειον') is an action, symbol or event that is used to convey meaning.
- The word 'wonder' (Gr. 'τερας') emphasizes the extraordinary nature of the signs themselves.
- The word 'miracles', (Gr. 'δυναμις'), has many meanings. It can also be translated 'power', 'ability', 'strength', 'might', and 'meaning'. When compared with other Greek words that mean power, this word emphasizes 'inherent' power, or the power that resides in a person or thing because of its nature. In the context of 'miracles', the word literally means 'mighty deeds' or 'displays of power'. It is easy to see the relationship between this word and 'signs' since a miracle is literally an evidence of power.

The Purpose of Signs, Wonders and Miracles

- It all goes back to Moses, and his question to God, "How will they know that you have sent me? Let's read **Exodus 4:1-9** – God gave Moses these abilities (interestingly, he needed to perform for the miracle for the elders of Israel (**Exodus 4:29-31**), and not just for Pharaoh and his court.
- Peter showed that this same reasoning applied to Jesus in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Read **Acts 2:22** – *Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.*
- Jesus also explained a reason for the miracles in **Matthew 9:1-8**—“*so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...*”

Man's Testimony With God's Confirmation

- Read **Mark 16:9-20**.
 - Even the apostles were struggling with testimony alone.
 - There are three significant problems with trying to interpret this passage as promising the ability to perform signs to all believers:
 - ✧ 1) It would imply that all 'believers' should speak in tongues which would be a direct contradiction of **1 Cor. 12:28-30**;
 - ✧ 2) It does not agree with the narrative of Acts, in which only key individuals had the ability to perform signs;
 - ✧ 3) It attempts to change the meaning of 'miraculous signs' from a supernatural support to the oral testimony of eye-witnesses to an evidence of 'salvation' or even 'belief' in general.
 - God confirms the testimony of his message!
- The testimony of the apostles was also affirmed through signs, wonders and miracles—read **Hebrews 2:3-4**: *This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will* (the word 'gifts' isn't actually here but "distributions" of the Holy Spirit).
 - Only the apostles and a select handful of other individuals had the ability to perform miraculous signs...

God's Confirmation Today

- The book of John exclusively uses the Greek word for 'signs' to describe the miracles performed by Jesus – emphasizing their purpose and meaning.
 - His disciples (2:11), many people (2:23), and even a Roman official's household in Capernaum (4:53-4) put their faith in him because of the signs.

- Others understood by the signs that Jesus was a teacher from God (3:1,2, 9:16), the Prophet promised by Moses (6:14) and even possibly the Christ (7:31).
- A great crowd followed him (6:2) and many came out to hear and see him (12:18) because of the signs.
- John himself summarizes in **20:30-31**: *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name.*
- The written word could serve the same purpose as a miraculous sign! The need for 'miraculous signs' to confirm the oral preaching diminished as the early church matured and the New Testament neared completion.
- **John 11:47, 12:37** – *Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him*

The Miraculous Power of God's Word

- In the first three gospels the word 'miracle' is consistently used instead of the word 'sign' in describing the supernatural feats done by Jesus, and in John's gospel the exact opposite is true.
- There is one noteworthy development concerning the Greek word translated 'miracle' in the NT -- in the gospels and Acts this word is used concretely describing both the 'source' and the 'expression' of God's power through physical healings, exorcisms, feeding the hungry, etc., but it is not used in connection with God's changing the hearts of men. In the letters we learn of another type of miracle or power. The gospel is spoken of as *'the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes'* (**Rom. 1:16, 1 Cor. 1:18, 24**).
- We all have done a survey through Acts showing how the church grew in the first century, but it is also interesting to see how the word of God spread
 - **Acts 2:40-41** – Those who accepted his **message** were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day
 - **Acts 4:4** – they heard the **word** and believed – and the number of men grew to be about 5,000
 - **Acts 6:7** – the **word of God** increased – the number of disciples grew greatly
 - **Acts 8:14** – when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the **word of the Lord**, they sent Peter and John to them.
 - **Acts 8:25** – When they had testified and proclaimed **the word of the Lord**, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.
 - **Acts 12:24** – the **word of God** grew and multiplied
 - **Acts 13:44, 46, 49** – the **word of the Lord** spread through the whole region.
 - **Acts 15:35, 36** – But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the **word of the Lord**. Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the **word of the Lord** and see how they are doing”
 - **Acts 19:17-20** – the **Word of God** spread widely and grew in power (had the victory)
- Interesting observation, in the book of Acts, the ‘Word of God’ is never read – IT IS ALWAYS SPOKEN!!! The verbs that describe it are speak, evangelize, preach (2 Greek words: emphatically report, to announce), testify and teach.

Paul's example:

- **Acts 9:20-25, 26-30** – Paul preached zealously but was in danger;
- **Acts 14:1** – Paul spoke so effectively that great numbers of Jews and Greeks believed;
- **Acts 17:1-2** – Paul went to the synagogue *as was his custom*;
 - Young disciples can learn the basics in such a way that they can teach others
 - **My example of answering the Holy Spirit Baptism question and getting 50% on the FP mid-term – I needed to hear Kip's comment: “This could not be taught by a young Christian and would not be understood by the typical person being studied with.”*

- **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** – Paul taught the message of the cross – it wasn't about him or about what he knew, it was about the gospel that other's need to hear

Methods of Persuasion Used by Paul in Evangelism and Discipling

- One of the descriptions of how Paul evangelized in the synagogue was that he tried *to persuade* people. Significant parallel descriptions are:
 - *Reasoned* [G1256] (**Acts 17:2** – ‘from the Scriptures’, **18:4** – ‘trying *to persuade* [G3982] Jews and Greeks’, **19:8** – ‘about the kingdom of God’, **19:9** – ‘daily’)
 - ✧ Expanded into ‘explaining’ [G1272 – lit. *to open (to understanding)*] and ‘giving evidence’ [G3908 – lit. *to set before*] ‘that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead’ (**Acts 17:3**)
 - ✧ In Athens, Paul *reasoned* [G1256] in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place with those who happened to be there (**Acts 17:17**)
 - ✧ In Ephesus, Paul entered the synagogue and *reasoned* [G1256] with the Jews (**Acts 18:19**)
 - ✧ Paul *reasoned* [G1256] with Felix about ‘righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come’ (**Acts 24:25**)
 - *Spoke boldly* [G3955] (**Acts 19:8**)
 - ✧ Paul *spoke boldly* in Damascus and in Jerusalem despite the danger (**Acts 9:27, 28**)
 - ✧ In the face of opposition (**Acts 13:46, 14:3, 18:26, 1 Thessalonians 2:2**)
 - ✧ In the presence of Agrippa (**Acts 26:26**)
 - *Testifying* [G1263] (**Acts 18:5** – ‘that Jesus was the Christ’, **28:23**) – paralleled with ‘speaking the word of the Lord’ (**Acts 8:25**)
 - ✧ Peter testified “Be saved from this perverse generation” (**Acts 2:40**)
 - ✧ Peter explained that Jesus ‘commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one who God appointed as judge of the living and the dead ... everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (**Acts 10:42-43**)
 - ✧ Paul testified “that Jesus was the Christ” (**Acts 18:5**)
 - ✧ Paul summarized his work as “testifying to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus” ... to testify to the gospel of God’s grace (**Acts 20:21, 23**)
 - ✧ Paul explained and testified to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of the Moses and from the Prophets (**Acts 28:23**)
 - *Explained* [G1620] (**Acts 28:23**)
 - ✧ Peter *explained* [G1620] to the brothers and apostles what happened ‘in orderly sequence’ or ‘precisely’ [G2517; same word used by Luke to describe ‘*the orderly account*’ of his gospel in **Luke 1:3**] (**Acts 11:4**)
 - ✧ Priscilla and Aquila *explained* [G1620] to Apollos the way of God ‘more accurately’ [G199; although it was already noted that he was teaching ‘accurately’ in the preceding verse; also, the same word used by Luke to describe how he investigated ‘*carefully*’ in compiling his gospel in **Luke 1:3**] (**Acts 18:26**)
 - *Teaching* [G1321] (**Acts 18:11**)
 - *Proclaiming* [G2605] (**Acts 17:3**)
- **Romans 10:14-17** – faith comes from hearing...
- **2 Timothy 2:14-16** – we need to study to show ourselves approved