

Overcoming Hindrances to Miracles
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We're in a sermon series entitled Miracles - When Heaven Touches Earth. So far we've defined miracles and the types of miracles and last week we taught on 15 Reasons Miracles Still Happen. Since we've examined the reason miracles happen - I thought it would be good to examine why miracles don't happen. So I'm preaching today on Overcoming Hindrances to Miracles.

There are many hindrances to miracles, but most of them fall under one heading:

1- Unrepentant Sin Hinders Miracles

Isaiah 59:1-2 says

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

Notice it says that sin separates us from God. This is not talking about God's omnipresence - because He is everywhere. But sin separates us from God's face. The Hebrew word for face is the main word used in the Old Testament for the manifest presence of God.

This is not saying that if you ever sin you will never experience miracles. If that were true - no one would ever experience a miracle because everyone sins. This is saying that unrepentant sin will separate you from the awareness of God's presence. And anything that drives away the presence of God will also drive away the power of God. This can happen to people, families, churches or even a nation.

It happened to Israel every time they turned from God to idols. God removed His presence and it gave an open door to their enemies to defeat them. They experienced no miracles until they repented. That's why Gideon asked in Judges 6:13

"O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

A lack of miracles happened in Israel because they turned from God. That's because miracles are hindered by sin that is habitually committed without remorse, repentance or confession.

To overcome that we must do what Psalm 66:18-20 says

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer. Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or withdraw His unfailing love from me.

Notice the key to overcoming the sin that hinders us is to quickly confess sin to God and receive His forgiveness. That restores us to God's presence and ultimately, His power.

Now I know that some people are teaching a hyper-grace message that says Christians do not need to repent or confess their sins. But in the book of Revelation – Jesus addresses 7 churches – and to 5 of them He says to repent or there will be consequences!

When Jesus healed a man at the pool of Siloam, He told the man in John 5:14

"Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you."

This indicates that sin can hinder a miracle or even reverse a miracle. The way to overcome it is to stop sinning!

2- Unbelief Hinders Miracles

One of the most dramatic occurrences of this is found in Matthew 13 when Jesus spoke in His hometown. At first the people were amazed - but then they said Matthew 13:55-58

"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor." And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Jesus could not do any miracles there because of their unbelief and their lack of honor.

Jesus always responded strongly to unbelief. For instance, when the disciples were unable to cast a demon out of a boy, they asked Jesus why and He answered in Matthew 17:20

"Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Unbelief kept the disciples from being able to move in supernatural power. What kept the children of Israel out of the Promised Land? Unbelief! Hebrews 3:19 says

So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

The only way to overcome the hindrance of unbelief is to have faith. To choose to believe God over circumstances!

There are many times in the Bible when Jesus asked people, "Do you believe?" before He healed them. Matthew 9:27-30 says

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When He had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and He asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then He touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; and their sight was restored.

Notice that we receive from God according to our faith. We don't receive from God based on our profession or education or income or anything other than pure faith. Faith is a strong conviction that something is true! Hebrews 11:1 says

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Wuest's Translation says

Faith is the title deed of things hoped for, the proof of things which are not being seen.

In other words – faith takes ownership of something before it takes possession of it! True faith is unwavering. That's why:

3- Being Double Minded Hinders Miracles

Being double minded is a form of unbelief. It's actually part-time faith mixed with part-time doubt. James 1:5-8 addresses this.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

To be double minded is to vacillate back and forth between faith and doubt. Now – all of us do that sometimes. We are like the father in Mark 9:22-24 who asked Jesus to heal his son.

"If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

All of us can grow in faith and all of us have to overcome doubt. But some people live their lives constantly vacillating between faith and doubt.

They believe – then they don't.
 They're in church – then they're gone.
 In and out of church and in and out of faith.
 That kind of double mindedness will never be blessed!

Others show doublemindedness when it comes to supernatural things like spiritual gifts and miracles. Many Christians say they are open to them, but they do not really believe for them to happen.

It always amazes me when people leave a Spirit-filled church and go to a non-Spirit-filled church. When I talk to them – I ask them, “Do you believe that miracles and the gifts of the spirit are for today?” They say, “Yes.” So I ask, “Then how can you be part of a church that doesn't believe that.” And they usually respond by saying, “They're open to it.”

I want to say, “Bust out in tongues some Sunday morning and see how open they are!” But what I want you to see today is that being open to something doesn't carry a lot of weight with God.

Being open to God's power is better than being closed to God's power. It's a step in the right direction - but it is not yet faith. A person who is just “open” is a person who does not yet believe.

For instance, a non-Christian can be open to the possibility that Jesus died on the cross for their sins. But if they do not repent of sin and place their faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross – they will die and go to hell open to truth – but never truly believing.

Being open to something doesn't count for much!

If you took your life savings to a bank and asked, “Can you keep my money safe” – and they responded “we're open to it” – would you leave your money with them? NO! You want someone you can believe in to keep your money safe.

If you are going to marry someone and when it comes to the wedding vows where the minister asks them, “Will you be faithful as long as you both shall live?” and they respond, “I'm open to it” – will you marry them? I hope not! Only marry someone you trust and believe in.

Are you getting my point? It's the same way with God. Saying you're open to the things of God will not get you much from God! You need to go beyond openness to faith.

The Bible does not tell us to just be open to salvation – but to repent and believe and be saved! The Bible does not tell us to just be open to the power of the Spirit – but it commands us to be filled with the Spirit!

The Bible does not tell us to be just open to the gifts of the Spirit – but it commands us to believe in them and pursue them diligently!

Jesus never said, “According to your openness be it unto you” but “according to your faith be it unto you.”

Jesus never said, “If you have openness the size of a mustard seed you will move mountains” but if you have faith you will move mountains!

So remove this hindrance to miracles by repenting of any unbelief and placing your faith in God and God alone!

4- A Lack of Honor Hinders Miracles

In the story we read earlier of Jesus in His hometown – He did no miracles because of their unbelief and their lack of honor. Their overfamiliarity with Him caused them to not believe in Him. Dishonor caused unbelief which resulted in a lack of miracles. That’s because honor releases the power of God. Dishonor hinders the power of God.

So – you can go to church and tithe and pray and read your Bible – and you should do all those things. But if your life is full of disrespect and dishonor – you will hinder the power of God in your life!

Obviously honor is important. So, what is honor? Honor means to value, to esteem highly, to view as important, to respect. The opposite of honor is dishonor. It means “to treat with disrespect, to treat as common or ordinary or unimportant; to not value.”

So – we dishonor God when we treat His miraculous power with disrespect – when we treat it as common or unimportant.

If you do not value the miraculous power of God – you will not experience much of it! Sometimes this involves how or when God does a miracle – or through whom He does a miracle.

For example, 2 Kings 5:1-15 tells the story of a Syrian commander named Naaman who was very respected, but he had leprosy. Naaman’s wife had a servant girl who told her that if Naaman went to Israel and saw the prophet Elisha – he would be healed. So – Naaman went to his king for permission to go and he got it along with a letter from his king to the king of Israel. Verse 6 says

The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy?"

When Elisha heard about it – he told the king to send Naaman to him.

So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?"

So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"

So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel."

What I want you to see is that Naaman first expected his healing to come through a king – but it didn't. Then he expected his healing to come through a prophet – but Elisha didn't even come out to speak with him. This upset Naaman and so did the fact that he thought the waters back home were better than the water of Israel. So he almost missed his miracle because he did not honor the way God wanted to perform the miracle and through whom God performed the miracle.

And many people miss their miracle because they want it performed a certain way at a certain time by a certain person. But, to overcome the hindrance of dishonor – we must honor the word of the Lord and we must honor the ways of God, including honoring those whom God wants to use to deliver our miracle.

You don't have to be prayed for by the evangelist on TV or the preacher at the big crusade or even the pastor here – which is me! God can use anyone He wants to deliver your miracle! Don't let dishonor steal it from you!

5- Lack of Prayer Hinders Miracles

James 4:2 says *You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

Obviously – if we don't pray for miracles – we won't receive miracles. But, it's not enough to just pray. As we saw earlier – we must pray in faith. Also:

6- Praying with Wrong Motives Hinders Miracles

James 4:3 says

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

What this is talking about is praying selfish prayers.

Let me say this first – it's not selfish to pray for yourself. It's not selfish to ask God to heal you or meet your needs. In fact – when Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer – He said in Matthew 6:11 *Give us today our daily bread.*

However – it is selfish when we pray only for ourselves. Selfish praying and living will hinder miracles. Proverbs 21:13 says

If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

So – we must not just pray for ourselves – but also for others. But our main concern in life and in prayer must be to glorify God!

7- Ungratefulness Hinders Miracles

Luke 17:12-19 tells about 10 lepers who asked Jesus to heal them. So He did and then He told them to go show themselves to the priests.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

What I want you to see here is that the man who was thankful received more than those who are not thankful! Where do I get that? Well, the Bible says that all ten lepers were healed, but after the one came back and gave thanks, Jesus said to him "Your faith has made you well."

The word used here for well is totally different from the word used earlier for cleanse. This time, the word for well is *sozo*, which means to be healed, to be delivered, to be saved, to be made whole. It is more than physical healing – it is also spiritual healing – salvation.

One commentary says that the other nine were healed merely in body, but this one was healed in a higher spiritual sense. However you look at it, this man received something that the others didn't.

I wonder if ungratefulness for what God has done in the past is causing you to miss out on some of God's miracles right now?

So, I encourage you to count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!

And when you count your blessings, God will give you more blessings to count!

When you give God thanks, He will give you more to be thankful for!

Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good!

Give thanks for all He's done for you!

Give thanks for answered prayer!

Give thanks that He never leaves you or forsakes you!

Thanks be to God who always gives us the victory through Jesus Christ.

ALWAYS give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In all things give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you!

Can you thank God this morning!!!