

SIGNS: THE DIVINE WITNESS

REACHING THEIR HEARTS THROUGH HIS

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SCRIPTURES

Romans 15:14-22; I Cor. 1:26-2:5

PURPOSE

To explain the need for God to powerfully intervene so our witness will be affirmed.

INTRODUCTION

1. Romans 15:18-19 explains the heart of this sermon series, Reaching Their Hearts through His, “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.”
2. Paul’s experience was reminiscent of Jesus’ ministry.
 - a. “. . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38).
 - b. Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father.”
3. Signs and miracles in Paul’s ministry pointed to God.
 - Acts 14:1-7 Describes God confirming the message of grace by signs.
 - Acts 14:8-10 Crippled man walks
 - Acts 16:16-18 Demon possessed slave girl who told fortunes was freed
 - Acts 16:25-26 Philippian earthquake at the jail
 - Acts 20:9-12 Eutychus healed after his fall
 - Acts 28:7-9 Publius’ father healed of fever and dysentery by Paul
4. God testifies to salvation through signs.
 - # “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”
 - (Heb. 2:3b-4).

I. WHAT ARE SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES?

- A. The Greek words interpreted miracles are literally “acts of power or signs.”
- B. Miracles are not . . .
 - 1. Miracles are not determined by strange facts; we may label those phenomena we cannot otherwise explain as miracles.
 - 2. Miracles are not simply the exception to the usual.
 - # Well-meaning Christians sometimes refer to an available parking space in the mall as a miracle. (At times we may feel that way.)
 - 3. Miracles are not happenings or results that are merely hard to believe.
 - # We may marvel at how small a scar is left by surgery. That may testify to the skill of the surgeon.
- C. The Bible wants us to look at what the miracle points to.
 - 1. We are inclined to hijack miracles and indicate they point to our spirituality, “I prayed. God answered my prayer.”
 - 2. Miracles are signs pointing to God and His mission among us.
 - # When people come to faith in Christ and their love becomes evident, they are signs pointing to God’s grace.

II. WHY DOES FAITH REST ON THE POWER OF GOD? (I COR. 1:26-2:5)

- A. Think of what you were like when God called you.
 - 1. Not many of us were wise by human standards.
 - 2. Not many of us were influential.
 - 3. Few of us were nobility by birth.
- B. God got involved, however.
 - 1. He chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.
 - 2. He chose the weak to shame the strong.
 - 3. He chose the lowly things to nullify the things that are.
- C. Why did God select the foolish, weak and lowly?
 - 1. So no one could boast of their own achievement or success.
 - 2. We are in Christ Jesus because of God.
 - 3. We are changed only by Christ.
 - 4. He alone has become our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

III. OUR WITNESSING AND PREACHING WERE WITH A DEMONSTRATION OF GOD’S POWER.

- A. Preaching is “not with wise and persuasive words” (4).
 - 1. Otherwise faith would be based on human wisdom.
 - 2. Our message is not conveyed with superior wisdom.

3. Our eloquence would give us reason to boast.
- B. Our words of witness are to be a demonstration of the Spirit's power.
 1. We are to testify to what God is doing; our boasting is in Him.
 2. Our focus is on Jesus the crucified Savior.
- C. The hopeful result is a faith based on God's power.

CONCLUSION

1. How do we get miracles to support our witness?
2. We don't, for God chooses how and when to break into human experience.
3. We continue to pray for God's intervention in our witnessing.
 - # An agnostic who said if three conditions merged, he would know God was behind it. I told him I would pray for this favorable circumstance. I checked in with him within the month. He rejoiced that what he hoped for had happened. But he would not believe God was responsible. He attributed it to luck or circumstance.
4. We can develop eyes to see God at work among us.
 - # We need a spiritual biography of the congregation, like a modern book of Acts.
5. We can ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit so His power can work through us.