

Miracles, Signs and Wonders

by Hubert Bunney

Hubert Bunney is a 1957 graduate of the AG's Eastern Bible Institute. He has pastored several churches and has been president and founder of three Assemblies of God bible schools. Many of the graduates of these schools are now serving the Lord in various denominations. Since 1987, Hubert and his wife Harriet have travelled in mobile ministry, teaching and healing in churches throughout the country.

The book of Acts (the history of the church) is very interesting in how it tells us the basis of the triumph of the church. I believe God wants the church today to be as victorious as it was in the book of Acts. He wants the victories and the power, the ability to spread the gospel and touch people's hearts. See, it is possible to have a head-to-head religion and never get to the heart. But the power of the Spirit can touch hearts. What is taught in the book of Acts is if we want to have triumph we have to honor the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, and honor his leadership through obedience to His word.

There is a lot of talk today that we don't need to relate our experiences to the bible. People say "This is the third move of God and he is doing experiences you can't find in the word." Well, if I can't find them in the word, I'm not gonna preach them because the bible says preach the word. It's enough for me just to have the many experiences of the bible I haven't had yet. And so I'm not going to be reaching out for something beyond the bible. I'm going to stay with the book and then I know I am safe. Feelings can fluctuate. I have heard people say the world was greener when I got saved. Well, the world was great when I met my wife, too. God will use feelings, bearing witness with our spirit but you cannot go completely by feelings. You have to stay to the word.

METHODS OF THE MIRACULOUS

There is an employment of God's methods and I believe that these methods taught in the book of Acts work. They are as much for today as they were for that day. I believe God set a pattern down here for us to follow this path. This is a dependence upon his means and promotion of His ends. I told you I wanted to speak to you about signs, wonders and miracles. Miracles have different accents. A sign is a miracle, a wonder is a miracle, and a miracle is a miracle. The miracle has the accent upon the power of the act. The sign puts the accent upon the portent or the pointing of the act. Pointing to the word of His grace, pointing to his servants, pointing to Jesus. It is sort of an attestation of the person, of the message, the means and the methods. And then a wonder has to do with the effect that this miracle has had upon the observers. They get into wonderment and they marvel that God has given such power unto men. And so it's the effects upon the observers, but they are all miracles. Now, I believe God has chosen in the book of Acts that his method of advertisement is the miraculous.

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place.

They were not scattered! They did not have this attitude, I can worship God anywhere; it's just as well to worship God on the golf course on Sunday morning as it is in church. They were all together in one place.

And I believe that is important. You know there were 500 people that were given the commission to return unto Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. From the time the Holy Spirit fell in days after, there were only 120 people there. Where were the other 380? They didn't come to be in one place in one accord. Maybe they had lots of things to do, as busy people, but they didn't get the promise. But these 120 stayed there in one place and in one accord, in prayer.

Acts 2:2. And suddenly there came from heaven as a mighty, rushing wind, and filled all the house where they were sitting.

If you check close in scripture, especially at the end of Luke, you'll find that they were on the Mount of Olives (about a Sabbath's day journey from Jerusalem) when he lifted up his hands and he blessed them and was received into heaven. And he said, "Return to Jerusalem! Now, they didn't go outside the walls of Jerusalem to John Marks' house like tradition tells you (they lead you there when you go over to Israel). They went inside the walls of Jerusalem. And you know that John Marks' house is almost as far out of the walls of Jerusalem as the Mount of Olives is. So they would have disobeyed if they went to John Marks' house. They went into the temple and were continually in the their praising and waiting upon God. And in this temple, it had many abodes (rooms). I think there were at least 38 rooms for the priests, and the apostles were in one of these upper-rooms of these walls in the courtyard of the temple.

Now, the apostles weren't sitting in the courtyard. They were sitting in this upper-room. The sound of a mighty, rushing wind did not fill Jerusalem. It filled the room where they were sitting. And so I don't think that was what drew the attention of the crowd together.

Acts 2:3. And there appeared unto them (120, not the people out in the courtyard) cloven tongues like as a fire, and it sat on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with tongues as the spirit gave them utterance.

Now, you never hear the crowd outside saying, "Wasn't that miraculous the fire on the heads of those people." I don't think the people in the courtyard that came together saw the fire or necessarily heard the wind that had filled the room where they were; neither the courtyard or the whole city.

Acts 2:5-8 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. And now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled (wonderment of this situation) saying one to another, "Behold are not all these Galileans?"

In other words, how come these Galileans are able to speak in our language wherein we were born. And when you go from v6, "When this was noised abroad," what was noised abroad? This speaking with tongues. So this sign of speaking with tongues was what drew the multitude together. And they have all kinds of questions about this thing.

Acts 2:12-13. And they were all amazed and were in doubt saying one to another, "What meaneth this? Others mocking said, "These men are full of new wine."

I want to say something about this because there are people who emphasize today that Christians should be drunk (in the spirit). If anything the bible teaches, is the opposite. Christians should be sober. I hear people say, "I was filled with the spirit, got into my car, backed into somebody else's car. On the way home, I knocked 5 garbage cans over, I was so filled with the spirit." But the Holy Spirit did not cause you to do that. Let's be honest about this thing. The only ones that said they were drunk were the mockers. Are you gonna take the words of the mockers? Peter stood up and rebuked the mockers and said they were wrong. So this idea that the more you are filled with the spirit, the more silly you act, the more drunk you are, is not found in the bible. It is found in people's minds. It's been propagated for years. "Be not drunk with wine where is revelry (excess), be filled with the spirit." Be under control of the Holy Ghost. It is vastly different!

What I am saying here is, God's advertisement was when this was noised abroad. What? When, this speaking in tongues was noised abroad, the multitude came together and said, "What means this? How hear everyone of us speak in our own language wherein we were born?" So God's advertisement was they were filled with the spirit and speaking with other tongues, the sign of being filled with the spirit.

Gal 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the spirit,

Some people have the ability to lay their hands upon people, for the people to receive the Holy Spirit. Simon wanted to buy that gift. He saw Peter do it and he said, "Give me this gift that whosoever I lay hands upon them may receive the spirit." That is one way to receive it, but another way is if a person is testifying or worshipping, they can minister the spirit. Preaching with the accompaniment of the manifestation of God's presence can minister the spirit.

One of things I've noticed today is we are separating the word from the spirit. The word and the spirit are not to be divorced, they are to be together. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life." So don't divorce and don't separate. Jesus said, "The spirit of the Lord was upon me for he anointed me to preach." There should be the spirit and the word together. What people are doing, they are separating the spirit and the word by saying "All you need is the word of God, and you just go by what the word says," but that is not right because the word says different things to different people. A classic example of this is Proverbs 26:4, which says "Answer not a fool according to his folly" and the following v5 says, "Answer a fool according to his folly." Tell me how you are to answer a fool? YOU HAVE TO BE LED OF THE SPIRIT! This is true in all the things of the bible.

Some people think that if a nation is sinful she will be judged of God. Not necessarily so! She might be blessed of God. "The goodness of God leads to repentance," so you don't know if God is going to judge America or not, and neither does anyone else. When these people try to tell you we're gonna be in for the greatest depression America has ever had, they don't know what they're talking about. We might have the greatest depression or we might have greatest prosperity to continue on. You can't take any scripture to prove America is going to be judged, because God might want to bless her to turn her from her sins like he did Israel. I pray that we are nation that he can continue to bless. I'm not anxious for economic collapse. Do you know anybody who would like to stand in line and collect soup? I'm not anxious for that. Now if that's what God wants, I will submit to it. But if God wants prosperity, I don't want to think I'm backslidden 'cause he's prospering me. See, some people think prosperity has the danger of getting proud. That is true, but God still wants to prosper us. You have not gained anything in character if you haven't had the test. People think, if I can stay away from the thing that might test me I'll show my character. No you won't. God put you into the test to show you your character. The glory of all nations is a land flowing with milk and honey. Do not let anyone talk you into putting your tail between your legs and your ears down like a dog 'cause God is blessing us with prosperity. That doesn't mean we are not a sinful nation and don't have problems in our country, but one of the problems we don't have right now is depression and recession. Thank God for that! "He gives us all things to enjoy." I'm not talking about this false type of thing that God wants all Christians to be millionaires, but God wants to prosper you. And one of the great things of prosperity is the will of God for your life, being in that place of contentment and satisfaction.

And so Gal 3:5 says here, "He therefore that ministereth to you the spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Do you know what we need to do? Say "God sharpen my spiritual ears." The bible says "the Lord dug out and bore Jesus ears that he might hear," that he might know right from wrong. God, get the sin of the world out of my ears that I might have better spiritual hearing, because if miracles take place by the hearing of faith, give me the faith that hears. We need to hear from God. Whenever you're in prayer and you're talking to God, that's good, but there should be a place of God talking to you. See, some people go into God's presence and they tell God their shopping list and what they want to do and sign off and say "See you tomorrow." After you've told him what is on your heart, maybe pause a minute for him to tell you what's on his heart. Then you can move under the direction of God and you're hearing his voice, which creates faith.

I want to take you to some scriptures to show you how much God put on signs, wonders, and miracles in the evangelism of the bible.

Rom 15:18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19. Through mighty signs, and wonders, by the power of the spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Now Paul constantly says, "My gospel was not in word only," and he tells us about this deed in v19, "Through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the spirit of God so that from to Jerusalem and around about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Now I looked up these scriptures and what it is actually saying is there is a partial gospel and there is a full gospel. And if you want to preach the full gospel, you can't divorce it from signs, wonders and miracles. He says, "I fully preached the gospel of Christ." So if you want to fully preach it, it is through mighty signs, wonders and by the power of God. We want the power of God. We don't want to separate the spirit and the word. We don't want the dry letter, which is death. We want God to be working with us.

Acts 2:22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you." Some translations on this word, approval, have it as accredited among you. You've heard of schools that were accredited and non-accredited, but Jesus was accredited by the miracles and wonders and signs which God did in the midst of them. God put a stamp of approval on him by the signs, wonders and miracles. Should we have that today? Jesus said, "Greater works shall ye do because I go unto my father." Now, I am not saying that I have it all but I'm open to it. I want it; I admit the need. I admit that I need more of the anointing of the spirit, I need more of God working with me. I believe the church of Jesus Christ today needs to go back to the pattern of the church of the book of Acts. And I believe if we do, we will see more of the miraculous, more of the manifest presence of God, more conviction of sin, and more things that cause people to fear God.

Now Jesus didn't go to the University of Jerusalem for his accreditation. He didn't say, "See the sheep skin I have on the wall." He didn't go up to someone being possessed and say, "In the name of the Alma Mater of the University of Jerusalem, come out." It didn't work that way! God backed him. They were amazed that even the spirits obeyed his voice, and so it was the miraculous again. This thing is spread through the bible to show us the importance of it. How we can ignore it, I don't know.

2 Cor 12:12. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

When Paul was preaching to the Corinthian church, he said these signs, wonders and mighty deeds are truly the marks of an apostle, that which a person must have to be an Apostle. The mark was the miraculous must be there.

WITNESS OF THE MIRACULOUS

God bears witness. The bible says, if you have received the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. It is important that we witness to people, but it's also important God works with us and he witnesses to people through us and by us.

Heb 2:4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

God bearing them; the them is the Apostles that heard Jesus in v3. Now, on the word "both", the Greek word is "Te", and "Te" is a special conjunction that says that the thing that it is connecting "with", and the thing it is connected to has an internal connection. If I have an external coupling, I can take it off but I can't take an internal connection off any better than if I tried to take my arm or head off. No way, it is inwardly connected. What it is saying here is, "God bearing them witness", has an inward connection with signs and wonders. So, God's method of bearing them witness was signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. When God wants to bear witness, it is inwardly connected that his witness is signs, wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 5:32. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Now, "these things" are, "these words", and the Greek word used for "word" here is not logos, but rhema.

We are witnesses of these rhema's. ... "And so is also the Holy Ghost;" Now what it is saying here is, we bore witness and so did the Holy Ghost. The witness of man is good but the witness of the Holy Ghost is better. So God is a witness, he is a testifier. We are to testify and God is to testify. Today, the missing thing at many times is, we give the testimony and God is silent. It doesn't do anything and doesn't say anything. We should so want God to work with us that we say, "God, I want you to bear witness. I'm doing the best I can to explain this gospel but I want you to help. I don't want be out here working alone. I'm a social worker, I work with you." They bore witness, "so also did the Holy Ghost." We should say, "Jesus, work with me. It is so lonely when I'm working alone." It's so hard and difficult trying to convince man to accept Jesus and no wonder, you're asking people to give up the rights of their life. So we are asking a hard thing and we need to have help of God in that situation.

Acts 14:3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

The reason why the Apostles stayed was because the unbelieving Jews stirred up the gentiles and made their mind evil effected. So the unbelieving Jewish people poisoned the Gentiles minds against the apostles, so they would not receive the Apostles message. But the Apostles felt when there is a battle on, we're going to see this thing through until we get the victory. They stayed a longer time and said, "We're gonna fight harder."

Now, one of the reasons the Lord doesn't back some ministry is because it is nothing but legalism; it is not the gospel of the grace of God, it is works. Can people do miracles by the works of the law? No, they do it by the hearing of faith. God bears witness to the gospel of the grace of God. He doesn't bear witness to legalism or clothesline preaching. He doesn't bear witness to picketing a saloon or chaining yourself to an abortion center. But he does bear witness to the gospel of Grace. The gospel will do more than shooting doctors. That is what causes people to join the other side. Let's get away from this foolishness and let's get to the main issue of changing the hearts of people. When they have a change of heart, it's all taken care of. You can stop someone from drinking and pass laws to make everything dry so nobody will get drunk, pass laws that it is illegal to perform abortion, but you can't make a sinful person a saint by laws. You just make him a mad rebel. He's mad at the church, mad at Christians, he's mad at everyone. Stop fighting with people about having a drink. They don't have anything else to make their heart happy. They don't have Jesus in their heart. See what I am saying is we both have the same goal but we don't agree with the method. I'm not interested in passing legislation of the United States so that sinners cannot sin.

A sinner sins because he is a sinner. And if you really want to make him mad, stop him from sinning. That is what he does because that is what he likes.

So God bore witness to the word of his grace. Grace will make you what you ought to be. Paul says, "I am what I am by the grace of God." Grace is the enabler that will keep me from sinning and make me the

person I ought to be. We need to preach the gospel of the grace of God because it works. It's a teacher. It teaches men to deny ungodliness in this present world. It teaches us to live sober lives without making us mad at God and at the church. I think we are doing things today that are hindering evangelism because we are making sinners mad at the church. See, I am not part of these things that are being passed upon sinners. Sign this petition, we'll get so that New York State cannot even sell an alcoholic beverage. No, I won't sign it, I have a better method. I want to be a friend of sinners and go right to the party where they are and sit down and share the gospel with them. I'll tell ya, the bible says this grace works, the other doesn't. Jesus was a friend of sinners, he went to a wedding reception and turned water into wine. I don't know how you did that Jesus, it must have been grape juice. It couldn't have been the real stuff. You wouldn't do that, Lord. I spent all of my life working against that alcohol and now you made some more. You do things that really bother me, Lord.

Acts 4:29-31. Now the Lord behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants with all boldness we may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal. And that signs and wonders may be done by the name of the Holy child Jesus.

Does this sound like a broken record? Is this like the God who doesn't have to say the same thing twice to keep repeating it over and over again? What is God trying to do? He is trying to etch it on our hearts so deep that we can't forget it. If we stretch forth our hand and God doesn't stretch his, nothing is going to happen. But if we discern that God wants someone to be healed, and we discern he's putting his hand on them, and we put ours out, something is going to happen.

John 10:25. Jesus answered them, I told you and you believed me not. The works that I do in my father's name they bear witness of me.

What are some of the works that Jesus did? In v21, it tells us that he opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick and did miracles and this bore witness of Jesus. Jesus testified about the Father and God the Father bore witness of Jesus and put approbation upon him.

John 10:31 And when the Jews took up stones again to stone him, v32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works have I shewed you from my father; for which of these works do you stone me? V33 The Jews answered him, saying, for a good work we stone thee not; ...

They wanted to stone him because he said he was the Son of God but Jesus basically says, "Why do you stone me when I've shown you the works of my father? That should be proof enough that I am what I say I am." If only the church would say to people when they're preaching to them, "If God is not backing you with the miraculous, we won't believe a word that is said. "Some Churches haven't seen a miracle in twenty years. In the bible they would be in bad shape and would have to admit to the church, that the words they preach from the pulpit are not trustworthy. But Jesus said "if God doesn't do the works, don't believe me. " (" If you don't believe me, believe the miracles.")

John 10:37. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that

the father is in me, and I in him. (KJV)

I've heard people say, miracles are not important. Jesus felt they were important enough to tell the people, "Don't believe what I say if there is no miracles. "If I'm not doing the work of my father, don't believe what I say."

PURPOSE OF THE MIRACULOUS

Mark 16:17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; ...

V20. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

Miracles have to have purpose. V17 & 18, list the signs. I want to be a believer like it is described here, that these signs might follow. I don't believe we should be on a witch-hunt for people being demon possessed but when you come up with a problem, deal with it. When you really believe the full gospel, you will speak with new tongues. And although God does not call us to be a snake charmer, he could use us like Paul who was bitten for the purpose of opening a door of ministry on the Island of Malta. It was divine intervention that the poison did not kill him and it was attestation to Paul that he didn't die. That's what gave him the opportunity to preach the gospel on this Island, then healing of Publius father made it more. When they came out, the whole island came out to be healed. So miracles have to have purpose. If you drink poison on purpose that's crazy. That might even be showing off. People have gold dust in their hair today, but what is its purpose? I can't find it at all in the bible.

Then V19: so then after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. V20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

The people who heard him when he raised his hands and blessed them and was ascended up into heaven, they went forth and preached everywhere with the Lord helping them and confirming it. When I was down at our alumni meeting, the Lord woke me up early in the morning and gave me this scripture in v20. And then God asked me a question that I was never, ever asked by anybody in my life. And the Lord said to me, "Do I major in minors?" No lord, you don't major in minors. "Well, I was working with them confirming the word with signs following them. Do I major in minors?" Do you know why the Lord asked me that? Everyplace I go, people are playing down the miraculous. I believe God wants to restore the miraculous to the modern day church. The wisdom of the world is trying to erase this with the busyness so we cannot wait on God. We need a restoration, a revival of the book of Acts. We need the latter and the former rain to come back to the church. We need another Pentecost, something that takes us out of the realm of the natural and into the spiritual.

Make us, Father, what you want us to be. May we preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Father, bear witness to your church, I pray, in the name of Jesus and for your glory, amen.