

## MIRACLES (17)

Clearly, the emphasis at a time when a “sign and wonder” miracle was possible was not on healing via miracle, but healing via medical doctor and prayer.

**QUESTION #11** – How does the present dispensation of Grace differ from the other dispensation which featured the “signs and wonders” miracles?

**There is absolutely no doubt that the vast majority of miracles occurred during the dispensation of the law and not the dispensation of Grace.** The Apostle John was one who made a sharp distinction between these two dispensations - John 1:17. In charting the miracles we may observe that almost all of the O.T. miracles and almost all of Jesus’ miracles were done under the dispensation of the law. The rest were done in the transition period between law and grace, in the book of Acts. What this means is that **by the time we get beyond the infant days of the Age of Grace, the “signs and wonders” miracles are gone.** As Sir Robert Anderson said, “the purpose of the miracles ... was to accredit the Messiah to Israel, and not, as generally supposed, to accredit Christianity to the heathen” (*The Silence of God*, p. 162). In fact, Paul made it very clear that by our faithful lives, not by miracles, we bring an appearance of God’s grace to all men in this present age (Titus 2:11; 1-13). **In the present dispensation in which we live - Grace completely and totally reigns.** As Ada Habershon said, “Grace is on the throne” (*The Study of Miracles*, p. 245).

When it comes to the subject of miracles, **a miracle was in fact a supernatural demonstration of God’s grace in the dispensation of law.** For example, a miracle that gave sight to a blind person or health to a diseased person or life to a dead person brought the grace of God to that person living under the law. In fact, as Miss Habershon said miracles “were often example of grace putting out its strength against law” (*Ibid.*, p. 245).

This is a critical point. For what this means is that everything God permits now is a Grace Age permission, not a Law Age punishment. For example, if God permits a sickness, or an infirmity, or a deformity, or a death, it is under the “reign of grace.”

An Israelite under the O.T. law who was stricken with a disease like leprosy, was typically stricken because of sin. This person had to go through a specific, legal cleansing ritual and process, after which he could expect to be healed. Under law, that is how it worked. However, this is not the case under grace. Under grace if someone is similarly afflicted, and has been personally and privately before the Lord, one must consider the infirmity as something God has permitted to show His grace is sufficient. Through the medical treatment and prayers of His people, God may or may not heal the physical problem, but what He will do in this Grace Age is permit His child to experience strength, growth, peace, contentment, joy and even thanksgiving.

The grace age child of God realizes that everything that happens to him comes from God’s royal hand of grace.

## MIRACLES (18)

**QUESTION #12** – Why would God permit His child in the Grace Age to have some sickness or infirmity?

Even though many in this day and age would have you believe that sickness is due to a lack of faith or faithfulness, or due to some sin in one's life, the Bible paints an entirely different picture. There are at least ten Biblical reasons why a believer gets sick:

**Reason #1** - Because in the Grace Age we have a limited, finite, imperfect body that breaks down. Philippians 2:25-30

Epaphroditus worked himself to the point of such exhaustion that he nearly died. The Greek text supports the idea that his sickness was due to the fact that he was physically run down. Sometimes we get sick because we don't have a perfect body. One of the great theologians was Lewis Sperry Chafer. Dr. Chafer had a stroke and ultimately concluded he needed more exercise. Even though he had a brilliant, sanctified mind, he lived in a finite body that broke down. Every now and then our imperfect body will break down and we will experience sickness.

**Reason #2** - Because in the Grace Age we live in an imperfect environment. I Timothy 5:23

Timothy's stomach problem was due to the bad water in the Mediterranean world. Paul did not want him drinking the water there anymore because it caused stomach problem. We support a national Peruvian missionary, who constantly has stomach and intestinal problems because of poor water. In fact, when he visits churches in the jungle areas, he almost always gets sick. One day, when we have a perfect environment, we won't have this problem anymore, but for now, we will get sick every now and then because we live in an imperfect world.

**Reason #3** - Because in the Grace Age God can use sickness to teach us to rely on His grace. II Corinthians 12:7-10

Paul had some physical infirmity, which many believe was an eyesight problem and God permitted him to continue to have it so he would rely more on God's grace. That physical problem drew Paul closer to the Lord and caused Paul to depend more on God.

**Reason #4** - Because in the Grace Age Satan may attack to get a believer to turn against God. Job 2:3-10

Job's physical problems were a satanic attack that was aimed at getting him to curse God and turn from God. Job had no idea as to why he got sick, but it was a direct satanic assault. When this kind of assault is taking place it is good to remember that the limits of the assault are regulated by God, the time of the ailment is regulated by God and if one remains faithful through it, the end result is one will be highly honored and greatly blessed by God.

## MIRACLES (19)

**Reason #5** - Because in the Grace Age God may glorify Himself by the eventual healing.  
John 11:1-4

Lazarus' sickness was for the purpose of demonstrating the glory of God through Jesus Christ. Every now and then, God's people gather and pray for one sick and God answers the prayer and when this happens, it is truly a God-glorifying moment.

In one of our ministries, a young man was in a terrible accident. The doctors did not think he would live. Our people started fervently praying and ultimately a month later, he was able to leave the hospital. I still fight back tears when I remember the first Sunday he walked back into church. It was a glorious moment in which our entire church offered praise and thanksgiving to God for his life. That healing did truly bring glory to God.

**Reason #6** - Because in the Grace Age God may use sickness as a means of taking His child home. Hebrews 9:27

God is the one who appoints the special moment in which He takes the believer home to be with Him. God appoints the time of a believer's death. One of the ways God uses to take a believer home is via sickness. When it came time for the great prophet Elisha to die, God used sickness as a means of taking him out of this life (II Kings 13:14-20). Even God's best servants eventually die and sickness is one of the ways God accomplishes it. Charles Haddon Spurgeon died in France because of health issues in 1892. D. L. Moody died in Kansas due to health issues in 1899. C. I. Scofield died near New York City due to health issues in 1921. Lewis Sperry Chafer died of health issues in Seattle in 1952. These were giants of the faith and God used sickness to take every one of them home to be with him.

**Reason #7** - Because in the Grace Age, God may use sickness to direct us to His will.

In Galatians 4:13-14, we learn that it was a bodily illness that actually caused Paul to stop over in the Galatia region. Many believe it was some form of malaria that Paul had, but regardless, God used this very sickness to put Paul in Galatia to preach.

If you find yourself with some sickness or infirmity, keep your heart and mind open for opportunities for ministry. God may actually be directing you to where He wants you to be.

Fanny Crosby believed that her blindness ultimately led her to faith in Christ at age 30 (1850) and then enabled her to see things with her spiritual heart that not too many could see with their physical eyes. She wrote 8,000 hymns and poems, many of which are classics for the church. Such hymns as "Blessed Assurance", "He Hideth My Soul", "Praise Him! Praise Him!", "Tell Me the Story of Jesus", "Close to Thee", just to name a few. She came to believe her blindness was a blessing from God that He used to direct her to His will for her life.

## MIRACLES (20)

**Reason #8** - Because in the Grace Age some don't heed medical counsel and take medicine.

Timothy was told by Paul to drink wine, not water for his stomach problem (I Timothy 5:23). Had Timothy refused to heed this wise counsel, he would have still had the stomach problems. Sometimes people just refuse to listen to good sound medical advice. In our first church, there was a man with serious heart and diabetic problems. His doctor advised him by following a specific diet and by a little exercise, he could live a long productive life. One time when I was at this man's home, he was laughing and joking about the fact that he was not obeying and was eating anything he wanted, in spite of what his doctor told him. He died. He wouldn't listen to counsel. Many people are sick because they don't listen or take their proper medicine.

**Reason #9** - Because in the Grace Age some heed medical counsel and don't pray.

King Asa had a very serious foot disease. He went to see his doctors, which was the right thing to do, but he didn't pray to God in the process. As a result, he died (II Chronicles 16:12-13). On the other hand, King Hezekiah was diseased the first thing he did was to pray and in the aftermath of prayer, he took medical treatment and he lived (II Kings 20:2-7).

When one of God's people gets sick, they need to seek medical help, but they also need to pray. Since God permits the sickness in the Grace Age, prayer and dependency on Him is vital to the process.

**Reason #10** - Because in the Grace Age God may use sickness as a judgment for sin.  
I Corinthians 11:30; James 5:13-18; Revelation 2:22-23

We must remember that this is the Grace Age and therefore, God does not typically or instantly deal with sin issues. He gives people time to repent and respond. Those who lie to the church don't drop instantly dead like Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5, but generally have time to repent and resolve things.

However, every once in a while God will judge one of His own through sickness. There are times when He may authorize a sickness to strike down one of His own as a judgment. In this case, the sickness is a means of trying to get the person to repent of something. If the believer repents, the sickness will be lifted, if he doesn't the sickness will probably take a believer home to be with the Lord.

J. Vernon McGee said that he believed one time in his life, God gave him a sickness so he would deal with something, which he did.

**Reason #11** – To make us a better Christ-like minister to others. II Cor. 1:5-6

When we experience a sickness, we are able to empathize and minister to others in a very personal way.