

“How can I experience God’s miracles for my life?”

Acts 14:8-10

A funny thing happened in Darlington, Maryland, several years ago. Edith, a mother of eight, was coming home from a neighbor’s house one Saturday afternoon. Things seemed too quiet as she walked across her front yard.

And trust me when you are the parent of eight, and things are quiet - you know there is trouble. Edith curiously peeked through the screen door as she approached the house and saw five of her youngest children huddled together concentrating on something.

As she crept closer to them, trying to discover the center of attention, she could not believe her eyes. Smack dab in the middle of the circle were five baby skunks.

Edith screamed at the top of her voice, “Quick children... run!”

And they did. Each kid grabbed a skunk and ran!

Does that sound like your life at times? Just when you think you have enough problems, and you try to deal with them, and they just multiply? Do you ever feel like it is going to take a miracle to get you out of your mess? Or more seriously: Do you ever wonder what it would take to really experience a miracle in your life? That is the question I want us to ponder this morning as we begin a mini series of sorts, entitled, Questions worth asking. The question want to begin with this morning is this: **How can I experience the miracles of God for my life?** What is it that puts people in the place where God will perform miracles in their lives? There are so many struggles and needs and issues that we face for which we really do need a miracle from God; so what is it that puts a person in the place where God will perform a miracle in their lives?

Now, I hope we all understand that God is not a heavenly vending machine where we can put in our 50 cents, punch the number of the miracle we want and out it pops. God does not perform miracles on demand. God is sovereign and he is the one who chooses if and when he will perform a miracle. But it is also true that God only performs miracles for those people who have put themselves in the channel of his grace, people who have put themselves in the place where God’s miracles occur. And so, it is possible for us to look at scripture and see what it took for someone to be the kind of person God would perform a miracle for and what they did that put them in that place of grace. So, that’s what we want to do this morning by looking at this passage in the book of Acts. It’s only a couple of verses long, and if you are not careful you will miss it. Listen to **Acts 14:8-10...prayer**

In these 3 verses in Acts 14, we find a man who experienced a miracle of God, and the question is how? How can we as individuals and as a church experience God’s miracles.

1) The first thing that I see happen in these verses is that there is a **candidacy** of the miracles of God.

What were the characteristics of this man’s life that made him a candidate to receive a miracle of God? Well, look at vs. 8 again, **“In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.”** Now, what I want you to notice is the way that Luke describes this man. He said:

- ☞ He was crippled in his feet,
- ☞ Lame from birth;
- ☞ And had never walked.

Now, Luke didn’t list those things just to list them. He didn’t do it just to pile up several different ways to say that this man was lame. There is something he was trying to say. What I see here is the description of a man who becomes a candidate for a miracle of God. Luke gives us **three characteristics**.

a) The man from Lystra accepted his own **failure**. Note that it says at the end of vs. 8 that this man had never walked, and trust me; no one had to point that fact out to him. He knew that as a crippled person, he was a complete failure. He knew he would never enter the Jerusalem Marathon. I mean, this man had to face his physical failings on a daily basis. He accepted his failure. So, tell me, why won't we? I mean, why won't we recognize our own failures? You say, "Wait a minute pastor, I'll admit that I'm not perfect." Yes, but will you come before God and openly say, "Lord, this is where I have failed you this week"? I find that the longer we are a part of this Christian life, the less we seem willing to admit to our failures with others and with God. Instead, we gloss over them and cover them up and put a little perfume on them so that they don't look so bad.

Do you know the most difficult person for me to help as a pastor? It is that person who cannot see their own need and who does not recognize their spiritual failure. I mean, the pagan that doesn't see that he has any need of God and doesn't see anything wrong with his sin. Or the husband who still thinks that the marriage problems are all his wife's fault. Or the teenager who comes to me and still believes that if he just didn't have parents things would be just fine. Or the employee who just knows that the reason his job is such a pain is all because he has the worst boss since Genghis Khan. The most difficult person to help is that person who doesn't fully face up to their own failures. *I heard a man tell about one time he and his wife were with the mayor of a certain city. They were traveling to a convention. So, they hopped in the car.*

The mayor decided that he wanted to drive. As he drove across town, he became lost. Even though they were short on time, he refused to stop and ask for directions. He refused to receive any help from the others in the car. And he kept insisting that he was not lost.

He kept driving and driving and driving until they missed their appointment. How simple it would have been if he had just admitted he was lost and ask for help.

Have you ever been in a situation like that? Please don't lift your hand or point any fingers, but you know what I'm talking about: people who refuse to admit they are wrong. *By the way, I read somewhere that in 1492 Columbus set out for the Orient and ended up in the Caribbean, and thus set a pattern that has continued for over 500 years. Men still won't ask for directions. And all of the ladies said, "AMEN!"*

What's the point? The point is that the person who becomes a candidate for a miracle from God is the person who openly accepts their own failures.

b) But notice also that he accepted his own **powerlessness**. It says there, **"In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet."** Luke, the writer of this passage who was a doctor by trade, literally said, "A powerless man in his feet in Lystra was sitting." And the reason he wrote it in that awkward way was to stress the fact that this man was powerless. He wanted you to know that this man had no strength whatsoever in his feet. He was powerless and he accepted that fact.

Now, here is the point: The person who becomes a candidate for a miracle of God must accept their own powerlessness as well. They must come to the point where they confess to God, "Lord, I cannot do anything about this." "Lord, I'm over my head here." "Lord, I can't fake it any longer." "It's up to you, or nothing, God." The person God performs miracles for is powerless and knows it. Please understand me carefully: ***I'm not talking about the person who just thinks they can't do anything about the situation. I'm talking about someone who is actually powerless to do anything about it,*** because if it's something that you can handle under your own abilities and with your own resources, guess what? God expects you to do it. That's why he gave you those abilities, and that's why he gave you those resources. He expects you to use those resources and those abilities. *They lived about 12 miles outside of town. You had to go down a long winding dirt road to get to their place East of Waycross where I was pastoring. And once you got to their place, you were sure that you had made a wrong turn.*

They lived in a shack of a home. It wasn't just neglected, it was abused and it was a mess. The couple living there came to church less than they thought they did and not nearly enough to grow much in the Lord.

They were raising a couple of their grandkids and that was what broke my heart. Those kids had to grow up in that situation. The couple never held a job in the entire time I knew them, although they were perfectly capable of doing so. Instead, they lived off the dole and whatever else they could manage to come by. It really was a sad situation.

But, I would make my way out to their home occasionally to call on them and pray with them. And each time I went the man said it. At first, I was sure that he was just kidding. But soon I realized that he was dead serious.

He would always say, “And pastor, be sure and pray that I win the Publisher’s Clearing House Sweepstakes. I should be getting notified just any day now, because I know God is going to work that miracle in my life.”

Now, folks, I’ll tell you a secret if you promise not to let anyone else know: I never prayed for that man to win the publisher’s clearing house sweepstakes. I felt it was a waste of breath. But I did pray for that man and his wife to wake up and begin to use the abilities they had to meet the needs of those kids. Did you ever notice that all the miracles of the bible began with a problem, but it was a problem that the person was genuinely powerless to solve. The person who is a candidate for a miracle from God is the person who accepts that powerlessness.

c) A candidate for a miracle of God is a person who accepts their failure, and their powerlessness, but also because He accepted his own **unworthiness**. He recognized that he didn’t deserve to have God do anything for him.

Vs.8 says, *“In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.”* I want you to underline the words, “who was lame from birth.” This guy had dealt with this problem his entire life. He had faced the pain of rejection from others because he was different. He had dealt with the feelings of self-pity that eat away at a person. He had faced the fierce feelings of worthlessness as he was unable to support himself, unable to make a life for himself, unable to ever help anyone else. There were great feelings of worthlessness and unworthiness. Let me promise you, had you met this guy you would never had thought of him as a very deserving sort. But there is something you need to understand and understand well: **All the miracles of the bible were done for people who did not deserve them!**

“Now, wait just a minute there preacher. That can’t be true.” Yes, it can. And yes it is, because none of us deserve God’s miracle working grace. None of us deserves God’s divine intervention. None of us deserves God’s miracles, and only those who recognize that fact become candidates for them. *Did you hear about the man who prayed, “Why, Lord? Why has my brother been blessed with wealth and I with nothing? All of my life I have never missed a single day without saying morning and evening prayers. My church attendance has been perfect. I have always loved my neighbor and given my money. Yet now, as I near the end of my life, I can hardly afford to pay my rent.*

“My brother, on the other hand, drinks and gambles and plays all the time. Yet he has more money than he can count. I don’t ask you to punish him, but tell me, why has he been given so much and I have been given nothing.”

Suddenly, there was a voice from heaven as God replied, “Because you’re such a self-righteous pain in the neck, that’s why.”

Something tells me that guy will never be a candidate for a miracle from God because he has failed to accept his own unworthiness. This man Paul and Barnabas ran into in Lystra became the perfect candidate for one of God’s miracles because: He was a man who accepted his own failure, he accepted his own powerlessness, and he accepted his own unworthiness. And if we would ever hope to experience one of God’s miracles, we must do the same.

2) Once we understand the candidacy of the miracles of God, we need to understand that **course** of the miracles of God.

I want you to catch the order of events that lead to this man's experience of a miracle from God. Look at vv. 9-10, "*He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.*" Something very important is going on here and I don't want you to miss it. It is the path to experiencing the miracles of God. There were three steps this man took that put him on the path to experiencing the miracles of God. Let's look at them very quickly:

a) The first step: He **listened** to the word of God. Vs. 9: "*He listened to Paul as he was speaking.*" Paul had been preaching about Jesus. He had been telling the story of the amazing grace of Jesus, and the man listened to the word. He listened to Paul tell him about the cross and the empty tomb. He listened to Paul tell him about sin and forgiveness. He listened to Paul tell him about holiness and righteousness and sanctified living. He listened to Paul tell him about the amazing grace and the awesome power of God. He listened to the word.

One of the things that concerns me in our church or in any church are the number of people who will come in and want God's miracles, without learning God's ways. I mean, they desperately want God's miraculous touch in their lives, but they want it on their own terms, rather than God's work according to God's ways. The first step, however, is listening to God's word and learning God's ways. *A child was watching a beautiful sunset with his mother once. The mother thought, "You know this is a good opportunity for me to teach my child something about God." So, she said, "You realize that God is the artist who painted this beautiful sunset." And her little boy said, "Yes, and he did it with his left hand." She looked at him and said, "How do you know that?" And he said, "Because Jesus is sitting on His right hand."*

Now, that's funny when it's a little kid. It's not so funny when it's an adult. And the fact of the matter is that most Christians sitting in church today are biblically illiterate. And yet, the first step that puts people in the place where the miracles of God can happen is the step of learning God's word.

b) Not only did this man listen to the word of God, He also **lived** by the word of God. The passage says, "*He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed.*" I want you to underline that statement, "he had faith to be healed." That's a critical statement for us to understand. I am convinced that we don't have a very biblical understanding of faith in our culture. For the biblical writers, to have faith in something, to believe something meant to act on that belief. There was no such thing as faith apart from obedience. If you believed in something, you did something based on that belief. Faith and obedience went together. In our culture, we have separated the two. We can believe something but not do anything about it. For example, did you know that **82%** of Americans say they believe that "prayer can change what happens in a person's life." But only **37%** of people pray once a day when they pray and the average prayer lasts under 5 minutes. And only **21%** of people have a time of extended prayer. The biblical writers would say, "Well, then they really don't believe in prayer otherwise they would pray." In the bible, there is no such thing as faith apart from obedience. **If you don't obey it, it's because you don't believe it.** So, to say that this man in Lystra had faith was to say that he obeyed what he had learned. If we would know the miracles of God, then we had better learn how to be obedient to his word.

c) This man who experienced the miracles of God not only listened to the word of God, and lived by the word of God, but he also **leaned** upon the word of God. And by that, I mean he took an authentic step of faith. It says, "*He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.*" I want you to underline those words, "Stand up on your feet." Get this picture now: Paul told this crippled man to stand up on his feet. Now, we look at that statement from this side of the miracle. I want you to picture it from that man's point of view. He didn't know God was going to perform a miracle, and here was this guy telling him to stand up on his feet. Remember, he had never stood on his feet before in his life. He had never walked, that's what vs. 8 said. Paul asked him to do something that he had never done before, and there's a reason for that.

It's a principle I want you to catch: ***God's miracles come only to those who attempt something they could never accomplish without God's miraculous intervention.*** Paul asked this man to stand up. He asked him to do something that he could never accomplish under his own power, and that's really the critical key to experiencing God's miracles. God's miracles don't come to people who only do what they know they can do under their own power. God's miracles only come to those who are willing to take a risk and attempt what they could never accomplish without the miraculous intervention of God.

Let's get honest for a moment. Most of us only attempt in life what we know we can do on our own. We keep life carefully paired down to those things that we are certain we can pull off under our own strength and with our own abilities. If we can see it, we'll believe it. But God always says, "You have to believe it in order to see it." If we can figure out how we can pull it off, we'll attempt it. And God says, "Attempt it and then I'll show you how I can pull it off." I honestly believe that the reason more of us don't experience the miracles of God is because we fail to take the risk. We fail to genuinely step out on faith, lean upon God's word, and attempt that which we know we could never accomplish without the miraculous intervention of God. But that's the path to God's miracles. It's a matter of listening to God's word, living by God's word, and leaning on God's word. That's what this man did, and he experienced a miracle of God, and that's what we must do if we ever hope to experience a miracle from God.

So, tell me, where are you on that path these days? Do you need to pray and ask God to put you in the place where you can begin to experience his miracles? Would you like to pray for someone you know needs a miracle of God in their lives; and you want to ask God to help them learn what it will take for them to get to the place where miracles can happen?

How Can I Experience The Miracles of God for My Life? Acts 14:8-10

What it would take to really experience a miracle in my life?

Two Biblical Lessons On The Miracles Of God:

#1: The _____ Of The Miracles Of God.

In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. (vs. 8)

Three Characteristics Of This Man's Life That Made Him A Candidate For A Miracle Of God:

1) He recognized his own _____.
He had never walked. (vs. 8)

2) He recognized his own _____.
In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet. (vs. 8)

3) He recognized his own _____.
In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. (vs. 8)

All the miracles of the bible were done for people who did not deserve them!

#2: The _____ Of The Miracles Of God.

He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. (vv. 9-10)

Three Steps That Put This Man On the Path To Experiencing God's Miracles:

[picture of a path]

1) He _____ to the word of God.
He listened to Paul as he was speaking. (vs. 9)

2) He _____ by the word of God.
He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed. (vs. 9)

82% of Americans say they believe that "prayer can change what happens in a person's life."
37% of people pray once a day when they pray and the average prayer lasts under 5 minutes.
21% of people have a time of extended prayer.

3) He _____ upon the word of God.
He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. (vv. 9-10)

Key Principle: God's miracles come only to those who _____ something they could never accomplish without God's miraculous intervention.

Where Are You At On The Path?