

A God of Miracles

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Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

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My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.

² I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old— ³ things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He did miracles in the sight of their ancestors in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan.

¹³ He divided the sea and led them through; he made the water stand up like a wall. ¹⁴ He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night. ¹⁵ He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them water as abundant as the seas; ¹⁶ he brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers.

We know that our God is a God of miracles because, after all, you are here. You are a miracle. You are a unique creation. There is no one exactly like you. Your fingerprints are your own. Your footprints are your own. Your DNA is your own. You can even have the exact same name as someone else, but you are still not the same person. God has performed healings. He has caused the ground to open up to swallow people. God

can plan things so far in advance that we are never ready when it happens. We can read about how God spoke everything into existence. We can read about the way that God brought multiple languages into this world. We know so much that God has already done that no one else could ever do, and yet, we have only scratched the surface of what God is capable of. The Israelites kept seeing miracle after miracle and still had trouble remaining faithful because each time, they thought this was the moment that God was going to show His “true colors.” They had a human understanding of trust, meaning that they understood that no one could be trusted.

I know a little about that. For so long, in my understanding of people growing up, if someone was being nice, they were really plotting something devious. I have a few examples that I will share with you. These get kind of raw, so bear with me. The first is the story of the bat. There was a bully at school who suddenly started being nice to me for no reason. I tried not to think anything of it, but still couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong. After a couple of weeks, I began to let my guard down, and that was when I walked in on a conversation the bully was having with his friends. I heard them describe how they were going to invite me to play at recess and were then going to take that bat and bash my brains in. I knew then that I was going to forever be questioning someone being nice.

The second story I want to share was of a time later, when I had begun to soften. I was at my cousin's house. There was a neighbor that came and started talking to us and wanted to hang out and play. We didn't think anything of it, after all, we were just kids. In front of my cousin's house was a little creek with a tunnel. We loved to go and sit in the tunnel and play with the water there, so the neighbor, who was named Vince, asked if he could talk with me there because he had a question for me. I was naïve enough to follow him there. It was only after we stepped into the tunnel that his devious nature revealed itself. He told me that he wanted me to get comfortable and strip down to my underwear. I started to realize what was taking place and refused. I began to scream for my brother to help me, but he held me down and put his hand over my mouth. I fought him and eventually had no alternative but to kick him in the groin. That was when I got free, ran to my brother, and my brother chased him away ready to kill him. It was a few weeks later, after he had received a haircut, that he followed my brother and me to the park and attempted to do so again. After this tragic event, I was done playing nice. I was done trusting people. I knew that there was no good in the world, but little did I know that God was going to prove me wrong.

So, when I think of how the Israelites behaved with their mistrust of God, I understand it some, but I had not witnessed the kinds of miracles they had experienced. When I was healed with the ability to walk again after the car incident, I could see

that perhaps, God was good. Even better, there could be good people in the world who did not genuinely want to harm me. Without learning that lesson, I don't know where I would be today. I am glad that God is a God of miracles. Now, let's dive into our verses for today.

1 My people, hear my teaching: listen to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old- 3 things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. We read here about the importance of passing down the knowledge that has been gained about God. The stories were more than just stories to them. They were not some Greek myths. They were not just fables and fairy tales. They were the true history of the Israelite nation about the works of God. Each time that something incredible happened, God would tell them the importance of passing it on to the next generation. When they parted the Red Sea, they were to make a monument. They were to always have something that would make it possible for another generation to ask what something meant. It was the same when the Jordan River stopped flowing while the priests were holding the Ark of the Covenant. When the walls of Jericho came down. It didn't matter; they were to share the stories so that the following generations would understand the importance of following God. This wasn't about puffing up the

chests of the Israelites because they were so great, but it was about acknowledging the greatness of God. These people would not know anything about the importance of serving God without being told why they do it by someone who experienced the miracles.

We have to know our history in order to know where we are going. When we don't learn from history, then we will most likely repeat all the failures. The closest that I can think of why it is important to share details of our history comes down to when our life comes to an end and someone is responsible for putting together an obituary for us. We have to tell enough stories and make enough of an impact that someone can know us well enough to share our legacy. God will never die, but we will. We need people to know not only what we experienced, but also what God was capable of doing even with someone as flawed as me. Knowing that I fail God as often as I do, speaks volumes about what all God accomplishes. That should inspire me to want to tell my children and all future generations of the magnitude of God's power.

God wanted this same inspiration to exist within the Israelite nation. He wanted them to know how much the Israelites complained and had to endure the wilderness just as much as He wanted them to share about the possession of the Promised Land of Canaan. They needed to know their history to understand why God would refer to Himself as the God of Abraham. Abraham was the beginning of the covenant that God made with

the holy nation. God made a promise even to Eve and the Serpent and God was going to make that come true. Without passing down the stories, then how could people understand the importance of being on guard for the Messiah that would come to save His people? Every story, every miracle, every discipline, every failure, every...whatever was going to point the way toward the Messiah and the fulfillment of the most important promise that God ever made. Promises were made of what that Messiah would accomplish. We celebrate that promise being accomplished by still telling the story of Jesus today. It is the very reason that we are here. Without celebrating our history, what hope would we have for the future? Was this the point that the psalmist was making? The commentator says this, “His purpose is edification, rebuke, encouragement, the deepening of godly fear and obedience. In a word, he means to give the spirit of the nation’s history.”¹

12 He did miracles in the sight of their ancestors in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan. 13 He divided the sea and let them through; he made the water stand up like a wall. 14 He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night. 15 He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them water as abundant as the seas; 16 he brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers.

As much as God did for the Israelites, do you know what they failed to do? They had trouble ever offering their appreciation.

¹ Accordance App, The Complete Biblical Library

Sure, they would tell the stories of the miracles, but very little did they say how much they appreciated what God did for them or were willing to understand why God would do it at all. He wasn't doing it because the Israelites were such good people? We know that that is not the case because of how much they complained and had to be rescued time and time again. Was it because God favored them over every one else? After all, they were "God's chosen people," right? They weren't chosen because God was favoring them, they were chosen because God knew that He could use them to share His message with others. In order for a movement to start, there has to be a beginning. Abraham was that beginning. It would then spread down the line until we got to Jesus. After Jesus came and did what He was sent to do by dying on the cross and rising again from the dead, the message would then spread on to the Gentiles. After the Gentiles of the area received the message from Paul among others, eventually, the message reached us. Without "God's chosen people," how could we have ever gotten to this point where we can gather on Sunday mornings? Our history is a shared history among all denominations. We may vary on some understandings of various things, but we all come from the tribe of Israel. We are all a fulfillment of that promise made to Abraham.

I for one, am proud that God chose me. All the way back in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve first came to be, God saw into the future so far that He could see me being formed and

what I would become for Him. Even then, He had a purpose for me, and I want nothing more than to fulfill that role. He saw you as well. He passed on the story and the message so that you could fulfill what He had planned for you from the very beginning. Many bumps in the road would take place to get you there, but He knows where we will end up. Are you just as thankful for the miracles that God has done with you and for you? Do you take the time to appreciate Him for His patience with you? Do you take the time to thank Him that He has given you another day? Do you take the time to appreciate that He is always willing to take you back? Do you take time to spend with Him daily like He asks us to do? Do you know His Word the way that you should? Do you understand and celebrate that we worship a God of miracles?

Who else has the power to send an angel to a virgin and not only tell her that she would have a child, but also make it happen for real. Who could make it possible for that child to grow up without sin affecting Him? He went to the cross completely innocent. He was beaten and mocked. He did it all for us. Was it worth it?

That is what we need to ask ourselves. When we pray, do we pray for sinful desires or do we ask for things because of necessity. The fact that the Israelites asked for food was not sinful, but the fact that they were asking wasn't for necessity, they were asking because what God had already provided was not being appreciated. They wanted more and more and more.

Sound familiar? People can never seem to find a way of being satisfied. I hope that God can look at me and see someone who is willing to be patient. I hope that God knows I believe everything that His Word says. I believe that He is a God of miracles. I celebrate that. Do you?