



Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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# **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MIRACLE AND PROVIDENCE**

David Cox

The religious world is often given to extremes. Without doubt, this is true when it comes to how people view God's working in the affairs of men. Many cannot distinguish in their mind how God can work providentially without working miraculously. The fact is that God is active in our world today through providence using the natural laws. This is quite different from God working through miracles in which God set the laws of nature aside to affect some change or result He desired. With this in mind, it is critical to define and differentiate between a miracle from God and God working through providence.

### **What Is A Miracle?**

In defining a miracle, one must look into the pages of scripture and the context. This is of utmost importance because our society uses the word "miracle" very loosely. The word "miracle" is commonly used to name incidents that have a slight chance of occurring. For example, the 1980 U.S. Hockey team won the gold medal against the Soviet Union; this was called the "Miracle on Ice." In January 2009, a US Airways Flight, after leaving LaGuardia Airport in New York City, struck a flock of geese and the pilot made an emergency landing on the Hudson River. This was referred to as the "Miracle on the Hudson." The wonderful event of bringing a child into this world is often described as "the miracle of birth." All of these examples are amazing events. The chances of these things happening would seem highly improbable, if not nearly impossible. We may be amazed and unable to express our amazement, but they are not truly "miracles". They do not measure up to what the Bible refers to as miracles.

A miracle is an event observable to the senses that exceeds all natural laws and can only be explained on the basis of supernatural power that comes from God. All of the above mentioned events do not meet the standards set by the definition. In the scriptures, miracles are sometimes called, wonders, signs, power, or works.

Examples of miracles in scripture are:

**1. Exodus 14:21** — *"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided."* Moses stretched his hand out over the sea, and the waters parted. There is no way, by natural law, that the stretching out of a hand would cause winds to blow or waters to separate. This was a true miracle that came from God.

**2. Numbers 21** — The children of Israel had been bitten by the fiery serpents and were dying. The Lord told Moses, *"Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."* So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived" (**Number 21:8-9**). The children of Israel that were bitten looked on the serpent of brass and were healed. This was truly a miracle; an event made possible by the supernatural power of God.

**3. Acts 3** — Peter and John were entering the temple at the gate called Beautiful. There was a man, lame from birth, that was laid at the gate daily to ask alms of those entering. As Peter and John were beginning to enter the temple, the lame man ask alms of them to which Peter said, *"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."* And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and anklebones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him" (**Acts 3:7-10**). As the council described this event, *"indeed a notable miracle"* (**Acts 4:16**) had occurred. Again, it is only through the supernatural power of God that this man, who had been lame from birth, received the ability to walk.

The scriptures contain many more miracles, signs, wonders, and works of God that can only be explained by the supernatural power that God has; true miracles that God used when confirming His revealed will to man.

### **What Is Providence?**

The word “providence” is of Latin origin (providentia) which means, to foresee. Providence involves God seeing a need or desired result and bringing events to pass to accomplish the desired result. Paul, speaking of God working in the affairs of life said, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, and to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28)*. Paul declared to those at Mars Hill, *“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands... He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ...for in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:24-28)*. Indeed, the scriptures speak of God over-seeing and His providential care.

The scriptures record many examples of miracles performed by God, and which ceased after the first century. Although God does not work in the affairs of men with miracles, God works providentially, through natural laws, to bring desired results to pass. The best example of God’s providence is seen in the life of Joseph. In **Genesis 37**, Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, received a coat of many colors from his father. The special treatment Joseph received from his father caused his brothers to hate him. Later, the brothers of Joseph were at Shechem tending the flocks. Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brethren. As Joseph came near to his brethren, they saw him and conspired to kill him. But Judah, his brother, devised a plan to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, and they sold him to an Egyptian, named Potiphar. Through a series of events, Joseph is cast into prison in Egypt and he interprets a dream of Pharaoh’s. As the result of interpreting the dream, Joseph is made second in command and placed over the collection of food for the famine that is coming. When the famine befalls, Joseph’s brothers come to Egypt to buy grain. When they arrive, Joseph meets them and reveals himself to them and eventually Jacob’s family was reunited with Joseph in Egypt. Joseph tells his brothers, *“So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 45:8-9)*. Joseph tells his brethren it was God that put him there. In Genesis 50, Jacob died, and the brothers of Joseph are afraid of what he will do to them. Joseph speaks to his brethren and says, *“Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about*

*as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:19-20)*. What a statement affirming the providence of God! The sparing of the seed of Abraham, what God had promised to His people, was accomplished. Not everything in the life of Joseph was good and pleasant. Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites, sold again, and taken to Egypt, where he spent time in prison. But God was sparing His people. There are other examples in scripture that show God working in the lives of men such as the Apostle Paul being delivered from death’s door on numerous occasions. Should we as Christians try to determine what is and what isn’t providence today? No. We need to remember verses like: **Deuteronomy 29:29**, *“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God”* Or, **Romans 11:33**, *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”* We can trust that God is working to fulfill His plan to the ultimate good of His people.

The difference in miracles and providence is not the question of “Is God working?” It is the understanding that miracles have ceased, but God continues to work in the affairs of this life to bring about His will. God works today through providence using nature, man, and other natural means to bring to pass what He desires...the spiritual good of all men. Although many will not choose to follow the path that will lead to eternal life in heaven, God will always be working for the ultimate good of those who seek Him and His will (**1 Peter 3:10-12**).

## **Responding to Immorality**

*Michael Hickox*

Immorality has been in the world for centuries.

Noah was surrounded by immorality prior to the flood (**Genesis 6:5**). Jeremiah and many of the prophets were surrounded by immorality (cf. **Jeremiah 3:6-11**). At times, Jesus was surrounded by immorality (**Matthew 27:11-50**).

Today, we are surrounded by immorality. It comes in many forms, some of which are grossly disturbing to us (cf. **Judges 19:22-30**), and all of which are grossly disturbing to God.

God will one day put an end to the world’s immorality, but until then, He has given us guidance as to how we should respond.

**Stand for the Truth:** The Holy Spirit through Paul admonished the Ephesians to *“be strong in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:10)*, putting on the *“whole armor of God” (verse 11)*, *“having girded your waist with truth” (verse 14)*. To withstand Satan and the immorality he produces, we must stand steadfastly *“as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3)*.

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This includes speaking out against immorality, as John the Baptist did when he knew that Herod the tetrarch was committing adultery with his brother Phillip's wife (**Matthew 14:3**). **Verse 4:** ...John had said to [Herod], "*It is not lawful for you to have her.*" John had the courage to stand against immorality, even though it ultimately led to his death (**verses 6-11**). We must have this same courage and zeal for the truth.

**Speak in Love:** Like John, Jesus took a stand against immorality. But the stand He took was never out of bitterness. It was always out of love for the soul(s) of the person(s) who needed to repent. He did not just say the right things. He said them for the right reasons.

As Jesus looked at the multitudes in **Matthew 9:36**, "*He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.*" Jesus hates immorality but loves those who have committed immorality and made it His mission to lead them to salvation (**Luke 19:10**). Jesus could have spoken against immorality with arrogance, given that He Himself never engaged in any of the sin that He opposed. Yet, He approached immorality with humility and compassion (**cf. John 8:3-11**).

We must share His purpose and character, and always speak the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15**).

**Shine Bright:** To be a soul-winner for Jesus, we must speak the truth in love, but we must also "practice what we preach." The Bible tells of many God-fearing people who taught lessons merely through their actions. Consider the impact Ruth had on other women through her love for Naomi (**Ruth 4:14-15**) or the impact Jesus had on Pilate through His silence when He was interrogated (**Matthew 27:12-14**).

We can have an enormous influence on others by being the people God desires. If we are full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, people will notice. If we give up things that the world deems important to pursue what God deems important, people will notice.

But if we live like the world, people will notice.

If we desire to help others escape from immorality, we must ensure that we ourselves are free of immorality.

**Pray:** The power of proper prayer cannot be overstated. Paul exhorted Timothy to pray for "*kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*" (**1 Timothy 2:2**). Prayer can help Christians throughout the world oppose sin without being severely persecuted.

We can also pray for help individually in leading others to repentance (**Ephesians 6:18-19; Colossians 4:3-4**). God has the power to answer such prayers however He desires (**Jeremiah 32:27; Luke 18:27**), and He will do so according to His wisdom.

**Trust God:** We may do each of these things correctly but still be surrounded by immorality. Some seed we sow will inevitably fall by the wayside, while other seed will fall on stony places, and some seed will fall among thorns (**Matthew 13:3-7**). The unfortunate reality is that immorality will exist on earth until God decides to put an end to it. We must simply control what we can and trust God for all else.

If we are ever persecuted physically for obeying God, we should rejoice to be worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name (**Acts 5:41**). If we are stoned (**Acts 7:54-60**) or beheaded (**Matthew 14:9-10**) for standing against immorality, we should have enough faith to be steadfast unto the point of death (**Revelation 2:10**).

Immorality will not go away as long as the earth is here, but neither will the truth. Let us not be overcome by the darkness of immorality, but overcome darkness with the light of God's Word.

## HEAVEN REJOICES WHILE WE MOURN

Our sister in Christ, Irene Hurd passed away Friday night between the hours of 8 and 9 PM. We are saddened by her loss. She was bright and cheery every time I met her whether she felt good or bad.

It was not in her nature to complain about any discomfort she felt personally. A smile seemed to make it better for her and as a result better for everyone around her.

For those of us left behind as she moves on to be in Paradise the wise man Solomon gives advice: **Eccl. 7:1** *A good name is better than precious oil; and the day of death, than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad.*

It is true Jesus is our example of how we should live and we view that through the scriptures. **1 Pet. 2:21** *For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps:* It is also true His example is set for us by those we see following Him in their lives. **1 Cor. 11:1** *Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.* It is a great encouragement to us to witness those who live for the Lord. Irene did this before us and we are thankful for her example. We have benefitted from her love.

**Jim Stauffer**

**Eph. 2:19** So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

**1Pet. 2:9** But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

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### NEWS AND NOTES:

J.R. DANIEL, GRANT CLOTHIER,  
AND JAN PATRICK CONTINUE ON  
THE PRAYER LIST.

PAT CLOTHIER IS IN GRAVE  
CONDITION AT HOME AT THE  
TIME OF WRITING.

BIBLE CLASSES: SUNDAY:  
GOSPEL OF JOHN - RON PECK

WEDNESDAY: PREMILLENNIALISM  
JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY AM SERMON: HOW FAR  
DOES OUR COMMITMENT  
EXTEND?



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10