

“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” John chapter 4 verse 48

The second of Jesus's 'signs' in the gospel of John sees him healing the son of a royal official without even going to where the boy was. As a result, on hearing that the boy was healed at the very time Jesus declared that he would be, the official believed, as did his entire household.

That's good, of course, but I can almost hear a sense of resignation and a sigh in the words of Jesus when he says “Go, your son will live.” It's true that the miracles that Jesus did were intended to point people to faith in him, but later in the gospel of John Jesus is clear that to believe because of a miracle or a wonderful sign is not the highest level of faith.

After his resurrection, Jesus appears alive to ten of his disciples. One, Thomas, is not there. When he turns up and hears about their experience he declares that he will never believe unless he sees and touches Jesus for himself. Jesus grants his wish, and appears to him, but Jesus suggests that he may have missed something important when he says “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” Thomas could have been the first of the billions since who have come to faith in the risen Jesus because of the testimony of witnesses, despite not seeing him with their own eyes.

One of the most frequent reasons for not coming to faith these days is that people refuse to believe what they cannot experience with their physical senses. They want proof of the reality of spiritual truth in the material world. But that's not really faith, if faith is, as the Bible defines it “the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.” The apostle Paul saw numerous miracles, yet he said to the Corinthian Christians, “We do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Miracles are wonderful, of course, but to demand them as a condition of exercising faith is something of a denial of what faith is supposed to be.

Prayer

Father, I choose to put my trust in you whether or not I have external proof in the form of miracles. I know that you can perform wonderful things on my behalf, and I see these things taking place in my life as I live it by faith in you. May I see the wonders of your spiritual power, not so that I will be convinced, but so that your name will be glorified in my life and so that others will be blessed. In Jesus' name, amen.

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