



Miracles & Me

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Introduction

What do we understand when we talk about miracles? To me, a miracle is when God acts directly in the world, either in answer to prayer or unbidden to achieve some goal which may not have happened otherwise. While the effects of the miracle may be noticed immediately, the main purpose may not be evident. Indeed, it may be to influence some future event, perhaps years later.

From our human perspective, we tend to classify miracles according to their apparent complexity. We may use terms such as major and minor miracles to categorise God's activities. But is it really any harder for Him to raise the dead, still a storm or turn water into wine than to get a shop keeper to find a last bottle of milk hidden in the storeroom when we needed one and the shelf was empty? The only difference is that some miracles are more dramatic and noticeable than others. In other words, we judge them by the impact that we notice them making on our lives or the lives of others.

I believe that our lives are frequently filled with miracles, but we just don't see them for what they are. That may be because they seem like "ordinary" events or lucky coincidences. Satan wants to distract us from noticing God working in our lives and to focus on the problems we encounter or observe in the world. And if he can get us to blame God, he's even happier.

From the title of this article, you may have realised that I am convinced that our God is a God of miracles. This is not the result of hearing powerful lectures or sermons, or by reading theological or academic books on the subject, but by experiencing His works in my life, sometimes dramatically to the point of saving my life. I have recently been thinking back over these and have wondered what God's purpose has been in protecting *my* life. I must thank Tom, our current pastor, for suggesting that one reason might be to tell others what He has done. As a result, I felt that I should record them, both for my benefit and to help others who may read this article. I decided that I should write it as a personal story or testimony, rather than as a theological treatise, as I believe this will give a real life, up-to-date perspective.

If you are doubtful about miracles in today's world or just curious, all I ask is that you keep an open mind as you read.

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2023

1. My Earliest Recollection of a Miracle

I'm not sure how old I was at the time – probably around 9 years but could have been younger. It was certainly several years before I became a Christian, and I would have been at primary school.

I'd been out for a walk with my parents along with my aunt, uncle and cousin and were approaching my grandmother's house which stood at the top of a steep bank (about 3 meters high) beside a country lane. At the top of the bank was a hedge in front of the house.

My cousin (who was a year older than me) and I decided to play a trick on the others and run ahead and hide behind the bay window to surprise them. The road curved slightly and there was a school playground next to the house so we would have been out of sight of the followers as we hid ourselves.

All we had to do was wait for them to arrive, but time dragged on and we were getting impatient. I decided to lean out over the hedge to see if they were coming, but it gave way and I fell through and rolled down into the road. When I stopped, I saw a car wheel pass close to my head (maybe about 50cm away, but that could be just my memory playing tricks). Anyway, the next thing I recall was my agitated mother checking that I was all right. Fortunately, apart from the scare, I was none the worse for wear.

So, was it a lucky break or was God at work protecting me? At the time I didn't know God and gave Him no thought, but with hindsight, I am inclined to think my escape was part of His plan.

2. A Conversion Miracle

At the time of writing, I've just passed the 60th anniversary of my conversion, which was the first time I consciously experienced the Father's supernatural activity in a albeit "minor" way. (See the introduction for my comment on major and minor miracles)

It was a cold, wintery February day and I walked home from school through the snow with a friend, Rob, who asked me if I was a Christian. Well, I was British, and I assumed that everyone living in Britain was one automatically. After all, we were always being told that it was a Christian country! He then asked if living in a garage would make me a car. A silly example, but it made sense to me. Rob then went on to explain what Christianity was all about, and how I could become a Christian.

That night as I lay in bed, I had a bout of hiccups which kept me awake. I thought about what Rob had said and prayed something like "God, if you're there, take these hiccups away." That's when I learnt that He heals as they stopped. That convinced me and I gave myself to Him. I was so excited that I added that He could even give the hiccups back if He wanted. That's when I learned that He has a sense of humour because they started up again. *But I didn't care! I'd encountered Jesus.*

Both Rob and I were in a church (I started going with him on Sundays) which leaned toward believing that miracles were just for Biblical times and, while we prayed for healing, we expected this to be accomplished by medication or surgery with the doctors guided by God. I'm not saying that this was a bad church by any means. I learnt a great deal of respect for the Bible and the young people were actively encouraged to grow and be involved in church life – we would lead services for the preacher, give testimonies and were involved in the leadership of the youth club. But I don't recall any teaching on the work of the Spirit and as a result, I forgot about the miraculous healing I'd received until He touched my life again.

From this point on, the timeline gets jumbled, and events may be out of sequence as I didn't record them. I strongly recommend that you write down what God does in your life along with the dates for future reference – you will find it invaluable.

3. Several Years Pass ...

As I grew through my teenage years to adulthood, I didn't give much thought to miracles as I believed that they only really happened in Bible stories and therefore almost became a kind of religious fairy tale. Miracles didn't happen in the modern world and especially not to an ordinary bloke like me. However, as I look back, I can recall happy, "chance" events where I can now see that God was guiding my life. Isn't that a definition of miraculous activity? Let me run through a few of them.

- I wanted to go to university to study modern languages (specifically French and German) with the idea of being able to teach primary school children. Only one university, Swansea, offered me a place, but I failed to achieve the required grades. So, I fell back on plan B and applied to a few Teacher Training Colleges and managed to get a place at St. Luke's College in Exeter. Here a couple of significant things happened.
 - The most important of these was that I met Monica who was later to become my wife. She was the president of the Christian Union at St. Loye's School of Occupational Therapy, also in Exeter, while I was Prayer Secretary at St. Luke's CU. Once a term we had a joint meeting along with CUs from Rolle Teacher Training College, Exmouth and Student Nurses at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital. While chatting, I mentioned the church I was attending and she mentioned that she lived with her parents in Whipton, a suburb of Exeter.

On the Saturday evening, I went for a late stroll over to Whipton, thinking about this attractive girl I'd met. I remember pausing and wondering where her home might be before returning to my accommodation on the college campus.

One Sunday evening not too long afterwards, I went to church and was surprised and delighted to see Monica there with a friend. Eager to get to know her better, I invited her and her friend back to college for coffee. Miraculously, they accepted.

Afterwards, I walked her home and discovered that she lived in the house I'd stopped outside the night before. *Coincidence or miracle?*

Over time we fell in love and eventually married a few years later. Fifty years later, we're still together! *Praise God!*

- I couldn't get a teaching job and ended up working as a computer operator in Bristol about 20 miles from our home in Weston-super-Mare. After one evening shift, I dashed to the train station to catch the last train home. I found a train waiting on the designated platform and got aboard. I was surprised to find it empty and the lights out, but I stayed seated. A guard came through and told me to get off quick as my train was waiting behind. This train was heading for a siding where it would spend the night. I jumped off and dashed back to the correct train, glad that God had sent the guard to rescue me, although at the time I just called it good luck.
- One day I was riding my motorcycle back from Bristol and came to a left curve travelling at about 45mph (about 70kph). As I started on the bend, a Jaguar car started overtaking me and getting too close. I knew I couldn't brake as I was already leaning into the turn, and I would have lost

control. I admit I was tempted to kick the car, but I would have come off worse by tipping the bike over (and it's not really the Christian way to respond).

I slowly eased off the throttle and managed to stay on the bike and continue in safety. I'm sure God was protecting me.

- A few years later, we moved to the Luton/Dunstable borders in Bedfordshire with our two daughters, Sarah and Joanne (or Jo as she now prefers to be called), to take a new job. On the day I started as an operations analyst in the IT department of a factory, my new manager showed me an organisational chart and said that the supervisor position above my role was vacant and that it was mine. I was dumbfounded and thrilled. I should have realised that God's plan was falling into place.

4. Surviving Redundancy with Father's Help – Twice!

As I mentioned above, we'd moved to Bedfordshire for my work and were very involved in the local Baptist church. I'd changed jobs a couple of times and was in a meeting when a senior executive from head office arrived to announce that the company was closing, and we would all be made redundant. I was to be in the first group to go. There was a generous severance package despite only having been in the company 11 months which meant that they had no legal obligation to give me anything. But I had a family and a mortgage to pay. Monica was working but her salary wouldn't pay all the bills.

By now, we were beginning to understand something of God's generosity and decided to continue with our financial giving to the church and some other organisations, trusting Him to keep us while I sought another job. We cut back on a few things but just before the money ran out, I secured employment with a software company I'd dealt with in my last two roles. A few years later, we moved to Wiltshire to be within a couple of hours of our parents.

After a few years in the new company, I was invited to take a new role reporting remotely to the European headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany. This was an interesting time but in 2006, we were told that the world head office in North Carolina was closing most of the European HQ and I, along with many of my colleagues, would no longer be needed. I was given a good redundancy package and was advised by a US manager and friend that I should consider working a freelancer for the customer education department in the UK. This I decided to do but had to wait a few months before I could start because of continuation of service regulations. Again, we decided to continue our giving which God honoured. At times, we wondered if we would be able to pay the bills that month, but always some work came in at the last moment. *God honours those who honour Him!*

5. A Life-Saving Miracle on the Road Number One

One windy Sunday morning, we were returning home from church in Luton. We had just turned out of the road on the right of the photograph by the red post box and started coming along the main road.

Suddenly there was a loud crash behind us and a bang on the roof of the car and I looked in the mirror to see what had happened. In those days, the streetlamps were mounted on the central reservation, and one was positioned roughly alongside the car on the opposite side of the road. I saw that this lamppost had fallen into the road immediately behind us and was blocking the road. How close to us became evident when I got out and saw that it had broken an overhead phone line which had hit the car and left a black rubber line over the roof above the rear seats where our girls were sitting. If you look closely, you can see the replacement line in the picture.



I telephoned the police to inform them of the obstruction and waited till they came and to warn other motorists of the danger.

If we'd been a couple of seconds later or the lamppost had blown down fractionally earlier, we would have been hit. God was watching out for us that day!

You will notice that the lights are now at the roadside. Maybe that's because of those events – I don't know. 😊

6. A Life-Saving Miracle on the Road Number Two



One evening I was driving home to Dunstable from work near Marlow in Buckinghamshire. As I was about to cross the motorway, I was travelling at about 50mph and a small van was approaching in the centre lane from the opposite direction indicating that the driver intended going onto the slip road to the motorway.

I was probably roughly by the blue sign when I realised that the van was not going to wait for me to pass and was starting to turn across the road in front of me. From that point onwards, my memory is a series of still images:

- The van was turning in front of me.
- Next, I was on his slip road roughly where the X is in the photo but still parallel to my original road (in other words across the road I was now on). This road was barely wider than the length of my car.
- A moment later I was back on the main road, and I could see the van in my mirror starting down the slip road.



I passed over that bridge most days on the way to and from work and could never see how I got into and out of that side road by any natural means. I can only put it down to God moving the car miraculously. (I often wonder what the thoughts of the van driver were.)

7. A Life-Saving Miracle on the Road Number Three

On another day, I was driving to work through some woodland when a branch (about 1.75 meters long and 8cm in diameter) fell from a tree and hit my windscreen. Fortunately, it didn't smash through as it was immediately in front of my face! It did, however, leave two star-shaped cracks looking like someone had fired a double-barrelled shotgun at me.

Okay, this might not actually been "life-saving", but it was a scary moment. Again, God had protected me, and I was able to laugh at the "bullet holes" and my "James Bond experience". While the branch would have needed to have been heavier to come through the windscreen, I was shaken but not stirred 😊!



8. A Life-Saving Miracle on the Road Number Four



A few years later, I was driving my company car to work. It had just been serviced but I wasn't happy with it. The suspension seemed to be making some clunking noises which I thought might be a problem with the shock absorbers. I intended calling the garage when I arrived at the office to arrange for it to be fixed.

However, I was going along this road at about 50 mph, when there was a big bang and the car swung to the left. The verge was a bit wider than in the photo and I was headed toward the hedge with a ditch before it. I had no control of the steering.

Next, the car swung right and back onto the road and stopped. Once my nerves calmed down, I stepped out and checked to see what had happened. The first thing I saw was one of the front wheels was turned at right angles and tucked back under the wing. I later learned that the bolt holding the steering rod to the axle had come off and the wheel acted like one on a supermarket trolley. There was also a pool of oil under the car and a trail behind it. The sump had been ripped open.

It was clear that I wasn't going to be able to drive, so I called the breakdown service. When the tow truck arrived, the mechanic looked at the damage and concluded that he would have expected the car to be on its roof after an accident like this.

How had I been kept safe? By now, I'm sure you will be able to anticipate my answer! I'll leave it to you to fill in the blank.

9. A Life-Saving Miracle on the Road Number Five

After I'd been made redundant for the second time, I filled in time between my freelance teaching jobs with some occasional driving through an employment agency. This didn't pay much but was better than sitting around waiting for work.

On one occasion, I was given the task of delivering a load on a 3.5-ton truck. As I drove off, every time I came to a hill and engaged a gear higher than second, the engine would seem to fade, and I had to change down. I assumed it was a blockage in the fuel line that caused the engine to struggle when an extra load was placed on it. Eventually, it cut out and I called the agency. They contacted their client who asked if I could drive a bit further to a garage to get it fixed. I was stopped on a narrow road where I couldn't turn round so agreed to try, provided I could get it going again.

When it started, the problem seemed to have vanished and I thought that the blockage had cleared. After a couple of miles, I started down a hill and then discovered the brakes weren't working. I later discovered that the original problem was that the brakes had been seized and now the pads had been pulled off. I was heading down the hill gathering speed. There was nowhere to pull over to slow the truck down as there was a stone wall on the left up to the road's edge and I couldn't change down to a lower gear. I was able to partially slow the vehicle by pulling on the handbrake, but that didn't help very much. I glanced at my satnav screen and saw that I was heading to a T-junction. *Help!*

When I finally saw the junction, I saw I was coming to a main road and that there was a steady flow of traffic going in both directions. Fortunately, there was no vehicle on the road in front of me but there was no chance of stopping in time. I had to hope for a gap and decide which way to turn.

I realised that my truck had a heavy load and if I turned sharp left to only affect one lane of traffic, I would be in danger of tipping the truck onto its side – not a good idea. So, I opted for the right turn. But God was watching and just as I got to the junction, there was a good break in the traffic, and I got round safely. I was now on an upward slope and was able to stop. Once I had calmed down, I slowly limped to the garage where I abandoned the vehicle.

Praise God for his unending care!



Epilogue

There are many more miracles that I could detail, for example I could tell you about:

- How when I was a toddler, I tried to ride my tricycle down the stairs and lived to tell the tale despite a nasty tumble.
- How when I applied for my first job in IT, the reference I gave was from Rob's father who, unknown to me, was the hardware engineer servicing the company's computer.
- How, at a Christian weekend in Gloucestershire, I noticed that heavy rain clouds were approaching the campsite and prayed that the rain would miss us. The clouds separated and went round the site! I learnt later that others were also praying so can't claim sole responsibility. 😊
- How, after trying for a few years to sell our house to move to Wales, having finally got an acceptable offer, and agreeing to buy our current home, our purchasers pulled out of the deal two days before completion. Then, 24 hours later, we had a new offer for £10,000 more than the original offer. And then, the vendor of our new home pulled out at the last minute, only to put it back on the market a few days later and agree a reduced price. *And that's the short story.* God is great!
- How, out of the blue, God has given me poems (*poems? – I never liked poetry before!*), drama scripts, prophetic words and even a song to write. If that's not miraculous, I don't know what is!
- And much more.

The observant among you will have noticed that I haven't quoted scripture to argue my case but chose to use personal experience and testimony to explain my viewpoint. To me, these events were totally convincing and hopefully helpful and more contemporary for you. However, I will now list a few texts for you to check out.

- Psalm 37²³⁻²⁴ *If the Lord delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.*
- Psalm 121¹⁻⁸ *I will lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip – He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over you will neither slumber or sleep. The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm – He will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore.*
- John 10²⁷⁻²⁸ *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; **no one can snatch them out of my hand.***

In Hebrews 13⁸, we are told that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.*" If Jesus performed miracles when He walked on earth, and He is unchanging, why should He stop now?

It seems to me that the church today (and especially in Britain) seldom experiences the miraculous. (Forgive me if I'm wrong). Why is this? I think there are several reasons:

- We're not expecting them and so we either don't recognise them or pass them off as lucky coincidences or, if we're Christians, a blessing. We need to be looking for God's activity

around us and giving Him the credit for what He's doing. To ignore it, we are falling into Satan's trap.

- We have become complacent with our 21st Century lifestyle and have adopted the world's attitude of "me first" and "I can do it" or "the world owes me". Yet we're not ready or willing to receive the spiritual riches God gives us and turn our vision outward.
- We allow too much of the world's voice to drown out what God is saying to us.
- ... (add your own opinion here)

Many Christians keep a prayer diary to remind them of the things they need to bring before God. I suggested above that we also keep praise diaries where we record what He is doing, not only in answer to prayer, but wherever we see His activity, however trivial we think it to be. If we regularly review it, I believe we will be surprised, encouraged, and thrilled.

At this point, you may think that I have led a life without experiencing hardship or pain (physical, emotional, or spiritual). That's certainly not the case. Over the years, we have had some tragedies in our lives and at one stage, I suffered a period of depression. But all the time, God was there and has helped me through it. Some pains are still there, but He is easing them which is also miraculous.

An epilogue is supposed to be a short ending comment, but in this instance that's not quite accurate as I don't think God has finished with me yet, but I'll stop there. I hope you will have found my experiences interesting and be eager to discover the miraculous in your walk with Jesus.