

# LIVING FROM MIRACLE TO MIRACLE

By Daniel Feliciano

## Introduction

Do you remember a time in your life when you felt that you had really received a miracle from God? Do you remember ever going through an experience in your life that now, looking back at that experience you feel compelled to say, “Wow, that was really a miracle.”

Let me share one of mine. The year was 1976. Gloria and I were quite young. We had only been married three years and we had our first baby girl. I was in full time ministry with an organization out of Brooklyn, NY called Teen Challenge, and Gloria was a stay at home mom. My salary was \$40 a week. Forty dollars could buy you a lot more then than now, but it was still very little money for a young family of three. One evenings, about 8:00 p.m., right before payday, we had not had dinner yet and after searching the whole kitchen we couldn't find any groceries to cook a meal. We did find about four dollars in change. And Gloria, whom from the very beginning of our marriage showed signs of being the genius of our family said, Dan, go to the “bodega” (the NY Spanish word for convenient store) buy some baby food and milk for the baby and in the meantime I am going to search in the kitchen once again to see if I find something for the two of us to eat. I went to the store in faith, ready to spend the little money we had left, got the baby food and milk and when I returned home to my surprise, dinner had been served.

The first miracle was that Gloria found something for us to eat. She found a can of tuna and a can of corn. She had set the table as usual and served dinner on the china that we received as one of our wedding gifts, and two glasses of water. The dinner table was beautifully arranged as a banquet table at a gala event. We sat at the table, said grace and joyfully ate our tuna meal. We still remember that night as one of our miracle nights because we distinctly remember being filled and satisfied as if we had eaten a nice juicy T-bone steak.

I know that for some of you that may not constitute a miracle. Someone may explain it away as resignation to circumstances or mere gratefulness on our part. However, I am sure that we all have at one point or another gone through certain difficult situations in our lives, that when we look at the resolutions, they appear to be miraculous.

## **Transition**

But if you don't believe that our tuna incident was a miracle, you have to believe in the miracles that the people of Israel received in the wilderness.

## **The Wilderness Experience**

Have you ever been in a wilderness? I have. One hour in a desert is pretty hard; one day is extremely difficult; one week is the closest thing to hell you could ever experience. Now, can you imagine, forty years? According to the Scriptures, the people of Israel went through one of the most challenging experiences as a nation, as a people, a forty-year journey through a wilderness.

Can you imagine what it would be like for forty years, wearing the same clothes, constantly dealing with the sun and the sand, struggling with scarcity, having to put up with the reality that no one in the community, not even the key leaders, have any idea where supplies for basic necessities are going to come from; knowing that you need to push forward but not knowing where you are going to or when you are going to arrive at the final destination; eating the same menu every single day for years and years and years. And on top of that, hundreds and thousands of little kids screaming and asking: "are we there yet?"

All of a sudden the hardships that the Israelites had to endure in Egypt paled in comparison to life in the wilderness; life in Egypt almost seemed like comfortable living to some; and slavery did not look so bad after all. Now the forty years of the wilderness experience made the 400 years of slavery appealing and desirable.

For forty years they had to endure a life style not common to humanity until that time. They were basically forced to live “from miracle to miracle”. But miracles they got, on a daily basis. God provided the miracle of light in the evening and the miracle of protection during day time. For decades God provided manna as bread, quails as meat and the always welcome morning dew. How’s that for “a stimulus package”.

The situation got so bad that the people of Israel resorted to doing what most of us would resort to in similar situations; complaint; complaining against the very God that was providing for their miracles on a daily basis. So they indicted God.

But before we harshly criticized them consider these two points of views prevalent during Old Testament times:

1. First view: It was common in Old Testament times to believe that everything that happened to you, happened because God allowed it to happen whether it was good or bad. God was responsible for all occurrences in my life.
2. Second view: It was common in biblical times to complain against God. Many Psalms are written with view in mind.

These two faith principles are blended together here in the passage of Scripture that we read today. That is why the people of Israel indicted God and Moses.

How did God respond to such an indictment against Him? God responded to their murmuring and complaints by providing yet another miracle, fresh water gushing out from a rock.

### **What is a miracle?**

Before we continue, let’s ponder very briefly over the question; what is a miracle?

One definition says that a **miracle** is an unexpected event attributed to divine intervention. Sometimes, the event is also attributed in part to a religious leader, hence the term, “miracle worker.”

Another definition states that a miracle is a perceptible interruption of the laws of nature. That God may work *with* the laws of nature to perform what people perceive as miracles.

Another view is that a "miracle" may also refer to any statistically unlikely but beneficial event, such as surviving a natural disaster, or simply a "wonderful" occurrence, regardless of likelihood, such as a birth, or surviving a terminal illness, escaping a life threatening situation or just 'beating the odds.'

Some explain that miracles were in fact natural events that had been set up by God at the beginning of time. The belief is that when the walls of Jericho fell, it was not because God directly brought them down when the people of Israel marched seven times around the walls of the city. Rather, God at the very beginning of creation preplanned that there would be an earthquake at that place and time, so that the city would fall to the Israelites.

Yet another view is that miracles are just coincidences perceived as miracles and that miracles do not really occur. Rather, they are the product of creative story tellers. They use them to embellish a hero or incident with a theological flavor. Using miracles in a story allows characters and situations to become bigger than life, and to stir the emotions of the listener or the reader more than the mundane and ordinary.

### **The Important Lesson**

But you know, whatever definition of miracles you may subscribe to, that was not the main issue in the wilderness experience of the people of Israel. That was not really the crust of the matter. The main issue lies in the answer of the exclamation of the people of Israel, “Is God really with us?”

That was the question. It is a question that requires a two-fold answer. The first part of the answer should be: “Yes, God is with us!” And the second part of the answer should be: “Yes, we are with God!”

God had been with the Hebrew people all along; the problem was that sometimes they were not with Him. And when that happens to be the case, miracles don't help us much because miracles are not the end but a means. The object of our faith is not the miracles of God but rather the God of our miracles.

If I really get the message of the Bible, God is more interested in a close relationship with His people than in spectacles or miracles. If I get the point of the stories in the Bible, God is more concerned with my faith for intimacy with Him than my faith to walk on water or to hit a rock and see water gushing out of it, or to blow on people or lay my hands on them and see them fall on their backs. I am certain; beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's intention was to take the people from miracles to intimacy. God had chosen the Hebrew people so that through them He could begin to share His wonderful unconditional love with all mankind.

Miracles are good. We welcome every single one of them. We all need a miracle every now and then. But knowing that God is with me in my journey of faith; knowing that every step of the way in my own life's wilderness, He is always there by my side because he is my God and I am his child and that I long to delight myself in his love and tenderness, that is the ultimate goal of my faith journey.

Knowing that there is an uninterrupted connection between God and myself where I recognize Him, as my God, my Savior, my Lord, is the most important security I can ever have in my life. When that intimate relationship is real, and at the top of my faith priorities, then it becomes easy for me to believe, that no matter what my situation may be, God will provide all of my needs, either out of water spewing rock, or even out of a can tuna.