



# BelPres Church

## **When God Does the Impossible**

Speaker: Scott Dudley

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Great to see you all here with us. Those of you who are here in person, those of you who are joining us online, thank you so much for being here. Last week, I was in Germany and Finland with some folks from this church to train and equip Afghan refugee pastors. These are people who have left Afghanistan, become Christians, are now leading ministries. And I was there with some folks from our church to do some equipping and empowering of them and training of them. And I got great stories to tell tell you that I'm not going to tell today. You're just going to have to keep coming to church to hear them. So have you ever said to yourself or to someone else, man, I need a miracle? Like, maybe you need a job or you're facing a health crisis or a financial or a relationship problem, and you think, I really need a miracle. So we're doing a sermon series about how when people in churches give the Holy Spirit free reign in their lives, revival breaks out. And some of those revivals change society for the better. And one of the common features just historically of revival movements has been an outbreak of miracles. So if you need a miracle today, you've come to the right place, because Jesus does miracles. That's bottom line of this sermon. Jesus does miracles. And we need to be open to that. So if you have a Bible, turn to Acts, Chapter two in the New Testament, or you can just follow along on the screens. And we've actually looked at this passage a couple of times, this sermon series, because it's the original revival on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, who is God's Spirit living inside of us, he comes and the disciples go out and they start telling everybody about it. And people from all over the world were

there who spoke all kinds of different languages, but they heard the disciples speaking in their native language, even though the disciples had never studied those languages. A couple weeks ago, I told you a story about a pastor I know who baptized a woman, and she came up out of the water speaking perfect Dutch, even though she'd never spoken Dutch before. It was a miracle, right? And so in the Bible, people thought that all these people must be drunk. And the apostle Peter says, no, they're not drunk, but something has gotten into them. So picking it up, in verse 16, Peter is explaining to the crowd what's going on. He says, they're not drunk. This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel in the last days. God says, I will pour out my spirit. Pour, not dribble. Pour out my spirit. Your Sons and daughters will prophesy. Remember that word, prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Because revival always involves younger and older generations working together. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. There it is again, that word. I will show wonders in the heavens above. So wonders of are just that. They are supernatural things that make us wonder. Hey, that's not normal. Maybe there is a spiritual world. Wonders and signs. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below. Skip down to verse 22. Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you, by miracles, wonders, and signs. So what he's getting at there is that miracles are signs that point to Jesus, accredit him as being God in human form. And this is important because when we. When we talk about miracles, we often, I think we think that miracles are like special favors God does for us, which reflects our vending machine theology here in the US God is a vending machine. I put in the right prayers and out pops my miracle. I get the job, I get the spouse, I get the healing. That is a transactional view of God. It's not a relational one. It's also not how the Bible talks about miracles. In the Bible, miracles do not call attention to themselves. They point to Jesus. It's not about the miracle, it's about the miracle giver. That's why they're called signs, because they point to Jesus. The other thing miracles point to is the ultimate healing that awaits everyone who is a follower of Jesus. So miracles are like previews that you get in a movie theater, right? You go to a movie theater and they show you previews of upcoming movies before the movie that you went to see. Like 45 minutes, they show you previews, right? And you're like, get on with the movie, right? Miracles are previews of the healing all followers of Jesus will receive in heaven, in bodies that will never suffer, get sick, or die again. If we

know Jesus, we. We will be healed. We're just talking about timing now or then. And Jesus does do miracles. There is a supernatural world that goes beyond our current science's abilities to describe. Although the more we discover, especially in physics, the more we realize our current science cannot explain everything. There's a saying that goes, your first drink of physics will make you a skeptic, but every drink after that will lead you straight to God. And one of the things science cannot explain is why is there something instead of nothing? And how did all this something come out of nothing? That is a miracle outside the laws of nature because something had to create those laws in the first place. So there is at least one verifiable miracle that has occurred, and with Jesus, there are many more. And I know right now some of you are thinking, okay, but then why don't we see more of them? I get that. I'm gonna get to that in a minute. But one of the features of revivals is an outbreak of signs, wonders, and miracles. Three in particular. The first, in times of revival, folks start speaking in tongues. And there are two kinds of speaking in tongues in the Bible. The first is what we see here in Acts 2, where the holy Spirit allows people to speak a language and empowers people to speak a language they've never studied, a real language, like my friend who baptized the woman who suddenly started speaking Dutch. The other kind of speaking in tongues that is in the Bible is kind of a special prayer language where people pray words they don't understand, but when they pray them, they feel incredibly close to God. I think it's part of what the Bible means when it says, we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. After I'd only been here. I'd only been here a couple of months. I had this, like, four or five older women, all of whom go to traditional worship, they all, independent of one another, made an appointment to see me because they all wanted to tell me the same thing. One woman, my favorite was she leaned forward and she whispered, I speak in tongues. And I whispered back, it's in the Bible. Why are we whispering? Speaking in tongues. Second thing that often happens in revival is prophetic words, both foretelling and forth. Telling passage we just read says that people will prophesy. And foretelling is when people see something God is gonna do in the future. This one is rare, and it needs to be handled with care. Because to say to someone, you know, God told me, you're gonna get pregnant or you're gonna marry so and so, or this specific thing is gonna happen on this specific date. We hurt people if we say that, and it doesn't happen. So general rule of thumb around this, you know, mates dates babies. Don't go there like

mates dates babies. There's too much emotion there. Really easy to think we've heard from God when we haven't. But this is a real gift as well. I have had people say things to Me that were going to happen to me, that happened. Prophetic words like that. I've had that happen. It's a real thing. Second kind of prophecy is fourth telling, speaking God's truth to people. It's saying, saying to someone, something like, you know, I was praying for you, and I just heard God say to tell you that you're trying to solve a problem he's already solved and you can let it go. Or sometimes it might be a word of loving, loving correction, right? It might be, you know, as I prayed, I really felt God say that you're hanging on to old things and he's inviting you into something new. Now, we need to be sure this is from God. We say these things with humility and in love because these things have been abused in churches. Some of you may have been hurt by the way they've been abused in churches. But abuse does not cancel legitimate use. And I've also had people speak prophetic words into my life that have changed my life. And then the third thing that happens during times of revival, and not just. Not just during times of revival, but you get a. Like a lot more that starts to happen is miracles. Often miraculous physical healings or medical healings, but other kinds of miracles as well. The stories I've told you over the years of victims of the genocide in Rwanda, forgiving the people who have killed their family, I'd say that's a miracle. There are people in this room who have experienced miracles, marriages that have seemed beyond all hope, restored and revitalized. There are infertile couples in this church who were told there was no hope, there was no hope, but they got pregnant anyway after receiving healing, prayer. And I know this raises the question, right? Like, if Jesus heals, then why don't we see more of it? Why wasn't my mom, my friend, my child healed? Why wasn't I healed? Does God love the people he heals more than the people he doesn't heal? And those are real and really painful questions. So let me, Let me address them. So first, remember, miracles aren't about who God loves more. They are previews that point to the ultimate healing all followers of Jesus will receive in heaven. We're not talking if we'll be healed. We're haggling over the timing. Second, miracles are rare. That's why they're called miracles, not ordinaries. Right? They were rare in the Bible, too. They were rare in the Bible, too. The Bible covers thousands of years of history and 3 million square miles. Okay, if you do the math on that, that's not. That's very few miracles per year, per square mile. Right. Which is why when Jesus did a miracle, nobody said, oh, jeez, another miracle. Man, you've seen one, you seen them all. Boring. No, they were rare in

the Bible. They're rare now. Third, there are unnoticed miracles. So if you have a Bible, go back one book, from the book of Acts to the book of John, John chapter two, which is about the first miracle Jesus ever did. This is Jesus first miracle, and it went completely unnoticed. Except for a couple of people, it was almost completely unnoticed. So Jesus was at a wedding, they ran out of wine. And then in verse 3 of John 2, it says, when the wine was gone, Jesus mother said to him, they have no more wine. Woman, why do you involve me? Jesus replied, my hour has not yet come. That seems a bit abrupt, doesn't it? Like, my son lives at home, and if my wife asked him to take out the trash and he said, woman, my hour has not yet come, my wife would be like, oh, I'm going to make it come. You get out of there. You take that trash out there. I think we can assume that back then this was sort of a term of endearment. I think it's a safe assumption. Jesus wouldn't be rude to his mom. Come on, man. His mother said to the servants, do whatever he tells you. Oh, that's a great statement of faith. Do whatever he tells you to do. Verse 7. Jesus said to the servants, fill the jars with water. So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, now draw some out and then and take it to the master of the banquet. They did so. And the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine, but he did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Except for Mary and the servants, no one knows this miracle has happened. Everyone else, including the host, just assumed there was enough wine. How many disasters has Jesus spared us from that we just didn't notice? How many, quote, chance meetings of someone that changed our life did Jesus orchestrate, but we just didn't notice? Those are miracles. We just don't notice them. Fourth reason we maybe don't see a lot of miracles is we explain them away. Pastor Ben Patterson talks about a man in his church named Allen who had terminal cancer, but was miraculously cured after they prayed for him. And for a while everyone said, well, remember when God healed Alan? But about a year later, the language had shifted to remember when we thought Alan had terminal cancer? We work so hard to discount miracles. Here in the west, we're always like, there must be a rational explanation somehow. We'll do anything to avoid calling it a miracle because we have just accepted our post enlightenment rationalist paradigm as the only way to know things. And that paradigm, rationalist paradigm, is great for inventing antibiotics and airplanes and all of that stuff, but it's not so great at explaining things outside our science's ability to describe. And by the way, it is only 300 years old, which is a blip in history.

And 300 years from now, they might go like, that paradigm was kind of limited. There are other ways of knowing. There's a story about an atheist scientist named Carl Sagan. He had a friend who was a nun, and she would challenge him on his atheism. And one day she asked him, does your mother love you? And he said, yes. And she said, prove it. I mean empirically, scientifically prove it. And Carl Sagan said, well, I just know that she. And the nun said, ah, ah, ah. What? You just know. You just know. There are other ways of knowing. Intuition, revelation, and faith. Ultimately, there's faith, an element of faith involved in miracles. I can't 100% prove it, but. But I know that it is true. As the philosopher Blaise Pascal said, the heart has its reasons that reason will never know. Fifth reason we don't see miracles is because we only call it a miracle if it's what we want. Some of you have heard of Joni Eareckson Tada, who became paralyzed from the neck down after a tragic accident when she was a teenager. But through that, Jesus gave her strength. She became a speaker that inspired and encouraged lots of people and experienced Jesus presence at a deep level that most of us will never experience. And in an interview with Larry King, she once said this. She said, I hope I can take this wheelchair with me to heaven and I'll say to Jesus before you send it to hell, let me tell you something. You were right when you said, in this world we have troubles. There's a lot of trouble being a quadriplegic. But the weaker I was in that thing, the. The harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. So thank you for this bruising of a blessing. It was a severe mercy, but I found you in it. So thank you for this chair. Wow. Wow. It is horrible to be paralyzed. And in glory she will dance on the streets of gold. But let me ask you this. What really is the bigger miracle? Being miraculously Cured or being able to say and mean it, thank you for this bruising of a blessing because it led me to you. Sometimes the miracle is something we don't want at first but are profoundly grateful for in the end. And then finally, we don't see as many miracles because we don't ask, not really. We don't ask, not really. We don't ask in desperation. We don't ask really, really believing that Jesus can do a miracle. A friend of mine, Pastor John Ortberg, said that one time a man in his church asked him why he never prayed for people to be healed. And John said, well, I've tried that before and nothing much happened. And the man said, well, nothing happens when you preach either, but that doesn't stop you. We don't ask in desperation. We have our money, our education, our medicine, and those are good things. But bit by bit by bit, they teach us to depend on ourselves mental. And when a miracle does

happen, we explain it away because deep down, deep down, we don't actually want it to be a miracle. You know why? Because if it's a miracle, that means God's in control, not us. So we want there to be a rational explanation that we can duplicate on our own without reference to God. Now, I am not saying. I am not saying that if you didn't get the miracle, it's because you didn't have enough faith. I'm not saying that the Bible doesn't say that. I'm also not saying don't seek out the best medical best that medicine has to offer. What I'm saying is miracles happen when we pray something like Jesus, you are my only real hope. And I pray boldly in your name for this miracle because I know you can do miracles. I also trust that whatever you give me is for my eternal good and that you always give us what we ourselves would ask for if we knew as much as you did. Joni Tada foundation found hope and joy as a quadriplegic. And when you can find it even there, you can find it anywhere. And you are free of needing your circumstances to go a certain way in order for you to have joy. And that is free indeed. About 10 years ago, I was in London and was visiting a church that had healing rooms. And I have partial vision loss because of glaucoma. So I went to their healing rooms and two very eager young men prayed for me very energetically for a long time that my vision would be restored. And. And then they asked, is it better? And I looked and I was like Nah. And so then they prayed again. And then they asked, is it better? And I said, no. We did this for, like, about 30 minutes of this, right? And then one of them said, okay, if we have to stay here all night, we're gonna keep praying until you're healed. And I thought, I'm in London, like, one of my favorite cities. So, like, if God isn't gonna heal me, I think it's best we accept it now and I can go to the National Gallery. So I said, well, you know, sometimes we pray and the miracle happens later, so maybe I should just go. And they're like, oh, okay. Two weeks later, I was at another church in California, and I went to their healing service, and two people prayed for me for a while, that my sight would, you know, my vision would get better. And then they said, is it better? And I looked and I said, no. And they prayed again, and they said, is it better? And I thought, oh, crikey, here we go again, right? I said, no. And they said, Jesus heals, you're not yet healed. Go in peace. That's some good theology right there. Jesus heals. You're not yet healed. Go in peace. We pray boldly for the miracle and obediently for whatever he has for us. So this week's action steps. First, pray boldly for that miracle you're seeking in your marriage or school or health or relationships or finances or jobs. I praise, preach a lot about what happens when God doesn't do the miracle, and I have neglected to preach

about what happens when he does. So pray boldly because our God does miracles. Second, pray obediently for whatever outcome he sends. Like Mary says, do whatever he says, trusting that God always gives us what we ourselves would ask for if we knew as much as he did. And then third, if you've experienced a miracle, tell people, tell your community group, tell your friends. Email me so that I can tell it to the whole church, because that reminds us that Jesus is powerful, there is power in the name of Jesus, and it encourages. We're very shy in this church about talking about this sort of thing. I want you to tell me so I can tell the whole church, because it encourages everyone in the church. In my former church, there was a man who had cancer, pancreatic cancer, and had exhausted all treatment options. The doctors told him to get his things in order to, because he only had another couple of months to live. And we had a healing service that he went to, and we prayed for him. And when we prayed for him, nothing happened. But that night, later that night in bed, he felt an intense heat go through his whole body and felt Jesus right there with him. And felt loved by Jesus like he'd never felt loved before. And all of his fears of death, which were many, just disappeared. And he felt a miraculous peace. And something else disappeared as well, because when he went to his next doctor's appointment, the cancer was completely gone. They ran multiple tests trying to figure it out. It was just gone. So this man asked his doctor to send an email to our church to testify that he had been healed. And the doctor did. And he said in his email, as a doctor, I cannot explain why his cancer is gone. It's an anomaly. Okay? I used to work in a hospital as a chaplain, so I know that anomaly is correct medical terminology for a miracle. And I know the story raises questions like, was it really? And how could it? And why him? And I know, I know, I know, I know, I know there's a lot you can do with a story like that, and one of them is to believe it. Believe that we serve a powerful God. A God powerful enough to make everything out of nothing. A God powerful enough to trample death, defeat sin, and raise Jesus from the dead. A God who, in the book of Ezekiel, brought dry bones back to life, which seems impossible. But since when has impossible ever stopped God? He is all things, knows all things, made all things, and he can do all things. Nothing is too big for him, nothing is too hard for him. Nothing is impossible for our God. And I believe there are miracles yet to come here in this room. So unto him who can do exceedingly, abundantly, beyond all we can ask or even imagine, according to the power that that is at work within you. Do you believe that bell press according to power that is at work within you? To him be

glory and honor in the church and in Christ Jesus, both now and forevermore. And all of God's people said together, amen, Jesus, there is power, power, wonderwork and power in your name. And so, Jesus, we bring to you what we need. A miracle. Where we need a miracle. We bring to you our marriages, our finances, our jobs, our careers, whatever it is, Lord. And we put them at the foot of your cross and we say, we know Jesus. We believe that you can do all things, help us in our unbelief. Thank you. That you are a wonder working God and Jesus, we will accept from your hand whatever you send our way. And we will testify to your goodness and to your power all the days of our life. We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

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**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- In Acts 2, what do you notice about the connection between the Holy Spirit, revival, signs and wonders?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Have you ever experienced something you would call supernatural in your own life or in someone you know? Explain.
- The sermon talked about praying both boldly and obediently for miracles. How can you do that this week?

**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.