

Miracles Unlimited

by Bill Volkman

HARRISON, Ark. — Daniel Aaron Rogers, the evangelist who tried unsuccessfully to resurrect the frozen body of his mother, abandoned his effort Thursday. Roger's wife Elizabeth said that the body of Gladys Rogers, 80, was buried in Missouri.

The evangelist had kept the body in a freezer at a funeral home in Reeds Spring, Mo., where he had conducted three prayer sessions in hopes of bringing his mother back to life. The first attempt was March 12, the second on Easter Sunday, and the final one on Tuesday night

Gladys Rogers died Feb. 2 of the flu. Rogers and his wife had kept the body in dry ice at their home for a week before taking it to the funeral home. Rogers repeatedly said that only his lack of faith would prevent the resurrection.

What was your personal reaction when you read the above recent newspaper account of an evangelist's attempt and failure to resurrect his mother from the dead? Was your reaction: "Oh, if only he had had more faith!", or "Those dumb healers will never learn!", or "Wouldn't God have been glorified if the attempted resurrection had been successful!", or "That's what happens when you tempt the Almighty!", or "Death is only an illusion: God answered his prayer by giving her an eternal resurrection!"

What would your reaction have been if the newspaper account had had a totally different ending? What if the evangelist and his family and friends had announced that the eighty-year-old woman had been resurrected? Then would you have responded: "Praise God!", or "I'd want the AMA to authenticate something like that before I'd believe it!", or "That proves that signs and wonders do follow them that believe!", or "They might have lucked out this time, but it's an adulterous generation that seeks after signs!"?

The area of miracles is a source of confusion and frustration for most people. Our theology, which includes our personal concept of God's involvement in the affairs of men, is clearly reflected in our response to an analysis of "successful" and "unsuccessful" miracles. Perhaps we should all look again at our perspective on miracles.

God's ways are not our ways. In the area of miracles, particularly healings, this is uniquely apparent. Who can fathom why a miraculous, instantaneous healing comes in one instance: a miraculous, progressive healing in another, a miraculous remission of disease in another, but devastating deterioration and/or death in a fourth case? Could it be that the latter intervention (or apparent lack of positive intervention) is also a miracle — in disguise?

If you understand Jesus' message to the imprisoned John the Baptist, just before he was beheaded, you will be among the few who know that miracles are not sporadic, but unlimited. When John sent some of his disciples to Jesus to confirm if He was the Christ, Jesus sent back the following strange report:

"The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me" (Matt. 11:5-6).

In other words, Jesus answered John's questions about the validity of His Messiahship by saying, "The visible miracles confirm who I am, and the poor in heart see God in these demonstrations. But happy and content is the one who does not trip over his limited, preconceived notions of how God works."

What would your reaction be to the foregoing message if you were in John's place? Remember, as the one who announced the coming of the Messiah and then baptized the only begotten Son of God, John had the inside track with Jesus if anyone did. Jesus acknowledged John's high standing when He said, "*Among those born of women, there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist.*" Shouldn't this qualify John for at least one major miracle — deliverance from the prison of cruel King Herod?

Yet Jesus personal message to John was to remind him that though Jesus sometimes performed demonstrations to enlighten men, John should not misinterpret apparent nonintervention with actual nonintervention. Prayer is always answered. A "no" in a specific situation is as much an answer as a "yes."

Though there was no miracle by the standards of many, John saw a miracle. There is a miracle that is far greater than any outward miracle affecting the body or circumstances. It is the miracle of faith — a willingness to believe that God is all and in all, even in what we label evil. "*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*" The fact is that God's glory (and ours) is sometimes better served by an inner change or inner strength in the midst of an outward problem, than by some preconceived outer positive manifestation of healing or change of circumstances.

Perhaps John clung to Job's statement of faith, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him*" (Job 13:15). Or perhaps John clung to the classic statement by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when Nebuchadnezzar told the three young men to worship the golden image, "or else" (Dan. 3:17,18).

In any event, my guess is that John knew exactly what Jesus meant when He said, "*And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me.*" He knew it meant, "*I could miraculously deliver you from your jail and impending death circumstances, but I have other miraculous plans for you. Don't let my apparent inaction on your behalf cause you to misunderstand My love for you.*"

True spiritual maturity does not demand specific demonstrations or visible miracles from God. Awareness of the Indwelling Christ, recognition of Omnipresence, is enough. Inner illumination, revelation, enlightenment, and ecstasy is its own reward. Inner awareness negates the necessity of changes in outer appearances. Though manifestations inevitably follow illumination, we do not concern ourselves with the mode of manifestation.

One of the national personalities on Christian television is known for his constant use of the expression, "*Expects miracle.*" Though I appreciate his emphasis of expecting great things of God, we must learn to recognize a God who frequently comes in disguise. Our focus must not be on manifestations, signs and miracles. Though supernatural events frequently follow belief, our single-eye focus must be on inner One-power union life, not on outer appearances.

What we generally call miracles are visible supernatural events which are meant to bear witness to man of God's omnipresence and omnipotence. They have as their purpose to enlighten men, to move them from doubt and unbelief to inner faith. Therefore, the ultimate miracle is the miracle of faith — that inner awareness of union, irrespective of outer circumstances. Once you experience this miracle you never demand an outer miracle again. The inner miracle swallows up the need for any future outer manifestation or signs. Those events which most people label as miracles are then seen by you as God's everyday Intervention in the affairs of men, and the events that appear to be evil, adverse and disastrous are seen as being equally wonderful.

When by faith Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed the five thousand, He did it so that the onlookers might never hunger again. His primary purpose was to give them

permanent spiritual understanding, not just to temporarily feed their bodies. That they had not been adequately enlightened was amply evidenced by the fact that they returned the next day wanting another miracle. Only the unenlightened and the immature demand more miracles after their exposure to a specific miraculous demonstration.

In many “healing” circles the participants never experience the ultimate miracle of faith. Therefore they constantly hanker after another miracle, supposedly “*that God might be glorified.*” In many cases God gives them their request, but sends leanness into their souls (Ps. 106:15). In other cases, He can do no miracles because of their unbelief. (Obviously there is no physical limitation on Omnipotence, it is merely a refusal to give an outer demonstration because of the unbelief). At that point the individuals involved would not believe though someone rose from the dead.

When Jesus spoke the word of faith, substantive miracles always resulted. When we speak words of faith, as distinguished from surface hopes, desires, and wishes, there will always be an embodiment of Spirit. Whatever we bind or loose on earth will always be bound or loosed in heaven. But we are not ready for this truth until we first experience the miracle of faith — until we are prepared to believe that God is actively involved in every situation irrespective of the temporal outcome.

Though John the Baptist did not fully understand the “mystery” of inner-life, because he preceded Pentecost, he nevertheless experienced the miracle of faith. John died happy because he did not stumble over the appearances of evil, knowing that they too were demonstrations of God-in-action.

When we finally begin to see with the single eye of faith, we will see God in all things, and miracles will be the rule rather than the exception. Living by the miracle of faith we will see miracles unlimited.