

## It's Time to Believe



Nicky Cruz February 17, 2020

### A Guest Message for an Hour of Need

Something is missing in our midst. It is gone, and we need to bring it back. A single church can't make this happen; the whole body of Christ has to unite together in one spirit and seek God to bring it about. I'm talking about the power of Christ to change and transform people who are in tremendous need. We all have friends and neighbors and people we don't yet know who are hurting. God has power to work miracles in their lives, and you and I are involved. Now is the time to believe for this to happen.

Two thousand years ago, while human beings were at their lowest point, God put into motion his plan to save us. Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, gave up all his power in heaven and exploded into human history. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (*1 Peter 2:24, ESV*).

The Lord not only sent his Son to die in our place, he gave us the Holy Spirit and a plan to make disciples by building his church. The early Christians that he raised up were a dynamic body of active, praying believers.

### Despite horrific persecution and opposition, the first Christians moved in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (*1 Thessalonians 1:5*). The early Christians witnessed some of the most amazing acts of God in history. The Lord did miraculous things through them, and they were unified in bringing his good news to the world. "Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul.... And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (*Acts 4:32-33*).

The early church knew their purpose was to spread the good news of God's power and love, and they had great success as they took the gospel to the world in Jesus' name. In the first 25 years of the church, it grew from 120 people to over 100,000. God was moving among them and adding to their numbers daily.

All of this happened despite the opposition of powerful enemies. In Acts 12, the Bible tells us the biggest threat to the church was King Herod. Herod made it his mission to wipe out Christians, and his first plan of attack was to get rid of their leaders.

Herod had James arrested and eventually executed. Next, he had Peter arrested with plans to have him executed as well. These were serious threats to God's people; they knew they were in a fight for their very survival. If Peter was killed, every Christian would likely be targeted.

In desperation, the early Christians did the only thing they had the power to do: They prayed. Prayer is the strength of the powerless. God will act for us, but we must be patient. "For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it

hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay” (*Habakkuk 2:3*).

As the Book of Acts shows, the church of Jesus Christ did not just survive but thrived. He supernaturally opened prison doors not only to free Peter but also John. He rescued Paul’s life from many dangers. All of these things built the new Christians’ faith, and they continued to confront every obstacle to the gospel.

## **During the church’s most pivotal moments, God did miracles for his people.**

He performed wonders through Moses, Elijah and others down to the early church. He also puts this incredible power in our hands to do the same works.

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below” (*Acts 2:17-19*).

What is our generation doing with that power? Part of the revival of the 60s and 70s was touched off when David Wilkerson came to New York City. I was in a gang, literally running wild, when the Lord called David to come and reach us. Heroin addiction was a huge problem, so he started Teen Challenge, and people were delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The drug problem wasn’t just in the ghetto, however; it only started there. It spread through the middle and upper middle class. Young white people had money for drugs; these were the children of society’s leaders at all levels. I saw those white kids leave their homes to live in the ghetto where they sold their bodies for drugs.

God intervened in the ghettos of New York City and in the suburbs and in the small towns.

Not many of the big church denominations at that time had heard about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Methodists began to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and miracles began to happen. God sent a revival to this country, and people were converted and gave their hearts to Jesus Christ.

This didn’t happen through powerful people. It happened through plain people who believed God could do it, people who prayed and acted in faith. That revival spread all over the United States and Europe. People everywhere were crying out for Jesus to save them.

## **When we think about God using us for revival, many of us lose heart because of our personal battles.**

At times, we all face big problems in our marriage, our family, our work, our relationships. As we try to fix those problems, the devil condemns us over our hang-ups. That’s when we lose heart. We undermine or underestimate ourselves and God’s ability to use us. We judge ourselves by accomplishments we haven’t achieved. All of this kills our self-esteem.

There is a great secret to winning that battle. Paul tells us, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (*Romans 1:16, NIV*).

Paul is one of God’s greatest examples to us. He had hang-ups that nobody knew about. He wrote about them in Corinthians, but he never told us what they were. In spite of those hang-ups, Paul was the one who received revelations of salvation, transformation and change. He was the one who stood in front of religious leaders, kings, people with the power to take his life, yet Paul wasn’t afraid of anything. He spoke the truth, and the Lord worked mighty miracles through Paul’s life.

Paul himself had a miraculous transformation. He was a persecutor, a killer of Christians, and he believed in that mission. God had to stop him through a miraculous intervention. He humbled Paul by temporarily blinding him, then he spoke to Paul from heaven, telling him that Jesus Christ has all power and that Jesus is the answer.

So, one of the greatest missionaries and teachers in history became the Apostle Paul by a miracle. For that to happen in our own lives, we have to believe that we too will see the glory of God in action. We have to believe in the Book of Acts; we have to walk through its pages and see the miracles God did. Its message is for everybody in all generations!

God's power is revealed when we pray in faith. Do we believe God is able to do what we ask? Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (*ESV*). Faith demands that, like Paul, I take off the weight of my pride, doubt and fear and stand before God broken and empty with nothing but raw trust. I need to close my ears to the voices that tell me what God can and cannot do or how God does and does not work. I need to allow God to show me for himself. God wants me to move past my doubts, crush my fears, forget natural limitations and move into the world of supernatural power.

### **No matter how grim things may look, God is bigger than your doubt.**

God will take your naked faith, no matter how small, and create a miracle bigger than you have ever dreamed or imagined. He has a history of using the insignificant to accomplish the impossible. "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (*Mark 10:27*).

The Christian life is built on faith. Your faith can move God's hand. Your faith can shake the heavens on someone's behalf. Your faith can make the devil flee. We walk by faith, not by sight.

Let the Holy Spirit fill you with his tremendous anointing. Be patient in faith as he heals your problems; those things cannot stop his work of revival. He will give you words to speak; he will give you courage, and he will give you boldness. May the Lord fill each of us with his compassion and mercy for the work that the Holy Spirit is calling us to do. May the church once again be a healthy body to bring the good news to a world that needs it more than ever.

Stand on the truth of God's Word. Believe his word to you. Embrace his direction, and you will see miracles.

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