

Reflections on God's Intervention at ORU

✖ In the last several years I have witnessed at least two astounding miracles where Christian ministries have experienced a literal rebirth.

The first is a doctrinal miracle. The Worldwide Church of God, founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1934, reexamined its doctrines and practices after Armstrong's death in 1986. This led to a complete theological reformation to Christian orthodoxy in the 1990s. Today, no longer viewed as a cult, the denomination has changed its name to Grace Communion International and is a member of the National Association of Evangelicals.

In my view, this is nothing short of a miracle. Almost always throughout history, the drift of denominations over time is away from biblical orthodoxy. But the Worldwide Church of God was captured by grace and took a radical turn out of darkness and into the light.

There's a second, even more recent miracle where a ministry has experienced a genuine resurrection. This is the *financial miracle* experienced recently by Oral Roberts University (ORU). Two years ago ORU was drowning in a quagmire of a \$55 million debt. Millions were owed in current bills. Added to this crisis were high-profile accusations and lawsuits filed by former faculty, the resignation of the second president, and a general malaise that had gripped many students, faculty and staff.

But all that has changed – and changed dramatically. The generosity of a missions-hearted family from Oklahoma City erased almost all of the University's debt. Alumni giving is now at an all-time high. Student morale has soared. Millions

of dollars have been poured into campus renovations. And a new, capable and godly president, Mark Rutland, is pointing ORU toward a bright future and its greatest impact ever.

ORU has played an important role in my family. I have been privileged to know Oral Roberts, his wife, the late Evelyn Roberts and their family since I was in high school. Both of my sisters received their undergraduate degrees from ORU. One sister met her husband there. Although my undergraduate degree is from another outstanding Christian university, I was humbled to receive an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from ORU in 1988.

Growing up in Tulsa I watched with joyful amazement as an evangelist's colossal faith was translated into the construction of innovative, futuristic buildings and a bustling hub of worldwide ministry. Now, four decades later, it's thrilling to sense the same excitement that permeated the campus in those early years returning to ORU.

In 1967, as a teenage preacher, I attended the dedication of ORU. My young heart pounded with vision as I witnessed the two greatest evangelists of that era, Billy Graham and Oral Roberts, standing together at the zenith of their strength. I will always remember how Billy Graham, in his dedicatory address, charged the new institution to be forever faithful to its commitment to world evangelization.

Fast-forward 42 years. Last month I stood in ORU's Christ's Chapel. As today's ORU students exit the chapel, they read again the directive the Lord gave Oral Roberts at the university's founding: "Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is seen dim, My voice is heard small, and My healing power is not known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth." That is Great Commission language and a clear, missional vision.

The next day I attended Rutland's inauguration as the third

President of ORU. I drank in the historic importance of the moment as the 91-year-old founder, Oral Roberts, laid his hands on the new president and pronounced blessing over Rutland and the university Roberts' faith had birthed.

Oral Roberts was a towering figure of the 20th century. We have much to learn from his life and legacy. In a few years we will begin to understand just how much we owe him. I am convinced that his fiercely focused faith, in the university's darkest hours, simply would not permit ORU to die. Like the patriarchs of old, he was human and therefore (like all of us) imperfect. But also like the patriarchs of antiquity, he shaped history by his faith and his clear vision of an all-sufficient, conquering Christ.

At the investiture of Rutland, the ORU combined choirs and orchestra performed the majestic "Hallelujah" from Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. The powerful strains of triumph filled the air:

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Hallelujah unto God's almighty Son!

Let your heart rejoice today. God still performs miracles.
Hallelujah unto God's almighty Son!