

FULCRUM

Vincent Cheung

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1. Expansionism: A Gospel Manifesto

Cessationism is a counter-Christian religion. It is the anti-gospel. It must be condemned with extreme force without mercy. However, it is aggravating that the debate has been set up between cessationism and continuationism, because this arrangement diverts attention away from the actual biblical doctrine about this topic of spiritual gifts and powers. The need to even entertain the discussion shows that the church is so far behind the biblical standard that we are wholly missing the thrust of the gospel, with no intention to catch up.

Continuationism as such is not the Bible's concern. Indeed, the Bible teaches that the spiritual gifts would continue until the coming of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:7). It also specifies the exact conditions for the cessation of these gifts. It indicates that by then, we will have received the maximum effects that the gifts could bring, including knowledge, healing, and so on -- not potentially, but actually in our experience -- such that there will be no more room for them to function (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). This is the only reason for any gift to cease. Healing is meaningless when we are invincible and indestructible, and there is no sickness. Prophecy has no purpose when we know fully, even as we are fully known. In fact, a special mode of revelation would be a setback when we can tap Jesus on the shoulder and ask him what we want to know "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Tongues would be impossible when we comprehend all languages. The fact that the cessationism debate exists is proof that we have not reached that stage, or else everyone would know that the gifts have ceased. Thus God's gifts and powers continue in us. Nevertheless, Scripture only assumes this continuationism or mentions it in passing when it discusses other things. It does not receive its own place or emphasis.

Expansionism is the Bible's explicit doctrine on the subject of spiritual gifts, powers, and miracles. This is the only biblical perspective. I am unaware of any official recognition of the doctrine, so I have selected the term for it. The word is sometimes used in a political sense, but I mean it in a spiritual sense. It is applied to every aspect of the advance of the gospel, but in this context we will focus on the supernatural powers and miracles that God works in association with his people. This is the biblical doctrine that supernatural powers and miracles are to increase in God's people beyond what Jesus Christ himself exercised. They are to multiply exponentially in quantity and frequency, in intensity and magnitude, in the diversity of representation, and in the scope of jurisdiction. There should be an accumulated momentum, so that compared to Jesus and the apostles, and compared to each previous generation, the church should demonstrate more miracles, greater miracles, miracles performed by more kinds of people, and miracles performed in more areas of the world.

The Prophets

The biblical basis for expansionism is so pervasive in revelation and so integral to the gospel that we must be selective in our discussion. I could start with Abraham, but then I would have to explain how God promised to bless all nations through him (Genesis 12:3),

how this promise culminates in the Spirit (Galatians 3:14), and how the Spirit entails miraculous powers and experiences (Acts 2:17-18, Galatians 3:5), so that the doctrine of expansionism had been established since the beginning. This should be sufficient to turn any Christian into an expansionist, but the argument from Abraham might be too intricate for the obstinate, for if they have a sufficient grasp of the gospel in the first place, they would not be cessationists or mere continuationists.

Moses offers us something more direct. When some men received the Spirit and prophesied for a while, seemingly in a context that Joshua disapproved, he told Moses to stop them. But Moses said, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29). Are religionists worried that we would rob Jesus of his honor? When the disciples urged Jesus to stop someone who performed miracles without his authorization, the Lord replied, "Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:39-40, also Luke 9:49-50). Like Moses, Jesus wanted an expansion of the ministry of miracles, not a restriction. Their wish would be fulfilled soon enough.

The prophets continued to preach a doctrine of expansionism. They predicted an increase of power and an increase of scope. Of course, they were not always focused on miracles, but stressed the progress of the gospel. We maintain that the miraculous is integral to the gospel, so that it is not an optional or temporary part of it, but that it is the gospel -- along with every other thing that is the gospel. Still, the prophets declared the doctrine of expansionism specifically for the miraculous. As Joel said, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29).

The Messiah

Jesus was even more explicit about it. He literally, physically, cursed a tree to death, and then he announced, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done" (Matthew 21:21). In other words, if you have faith, then you can perform a similar miracle, and you can perform a greater miracle. But you are so bothered about whether the thing even continues! And you claim that you are Christians. How many times did he say something like this to his disciples? It is recorded again in Mark 11:23. In another place, he cast out an evil spirit, and then said, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20). If you have faith, a similar miracle is possible, like removing a demon. If you have faith, a greater miracle is possible, like removing a mountain. If you have faith, "nothing will be impossible for you."

Jesus would perform a miracle, and then he would say that the one who has faith can perform the same miracle, and even a greater miracle -- a greater miracle than the one he did. It was as if he wanted to erase every doubt and condemn every excuse. He emphasized this doctrine again and again, and he formulated it in explicit terms. He referred to his miracles (John 14:11), and then he said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (14:12). This leaves no room for cessationism, but it is much more than continuationism. It is expansionism.

The Bible contains statements that promise us the ability to perform specific kinds of miracles by faith. For example, James 5:15 is a promise for miracles of healing. In fact, it is a command to perform miracles of healing as much as it is a promise. However, even before we learn about these promises, or even without them, John 14:12 guarantees the continuation and expansion of the miracles that Jesus performed. Even without Matthew 17:20, Matthew 21:21, Mark 11:23, and every other passage like these, the one who has faith possesses an irrefutable and permanent basis to perform the same kinds of miracles, such as to command a sickness to leave someone, or to command the restoration of a damaged or missing organ. John 14:12 encompasses all the miracles of Christ, so that miracles of prophecy, miracles of nature, and all other miracles, are also included and promised to those who have faith. That said, we indeed have Matthew 17:20, Matthew 21:21, Mark 11:23, and many other passages that dictate the doctrine of expansionism. It is inescapable.

Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). This expansionist manifesto is often repeated by self-righteous religionists, but the mandate is to teach the nations the doctrines of Christ, not the traditions of men. Therefore, to preach the gospel must involve telling people about the miracles of Jesus, and that if they have faith, they can perform similar miracles and even greater miracles. This is the doctrine of expansionism. This in turn means that those who do not teach expansionism disobeys the Great Commission. They either do not preach the gospel, or they preach a different gospel. Although our focus is on miracles, this doctrine embraces everything Jesus did, and not only his miracles. Christians must do the same, and then do even more. Thus they must preach the gospel to all the nations, beyond the territory that Jesus covered. This makes the doctrine of expansionism even more significant and necessary. This makes it even more inexcusable to overlook it, to reject it, or to be selective about it.

The Disciples

Before Christ ascended to the throne of God, he declared that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples, and they would receive the same power that he exercised in his ministry (Acts 1:8). Keep in mind that he had already promised that anyone could perform the same and even greater miracles by faith, and the disciples had already been performing miracles

by faith, healing the sick and casting out demons in his name. Jesus did not want this to merely continue. He wanted more, much more. This would add still another dimension of spiritual power to their lives -- faith upon faith, power upon power. Jesus was not satisfied until his followers had attained an excessive and ridiculous level of charismatic endowments. He refused to accept a mere continuation of his ministry, but he demanded an expansion, an escalation. He wanted the power they demonstrate to be outright absurd. He told them not to leave the city until the Spirit arrived. Then they were to expand, and carry this power "to the ends of the earth."

When we come to the events after the ascension of Christ, we need to move quickly, because too many things happened for us to consider them in detail. The disciples were no longer just talking about it, but they were doing it. Expansion in every aspect was happening -- the quantity of the miracles, the quality of the miracles, the diversity of believers, and the immensity of territories. There was an explosion of supernatural power, and miracles splattered all over the place.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived in a spectacular fashion upon the group of believers. Only ten percent of them were apostles (Acts 1:15), but all of them were directly infused with the same power to receive revelations and to perform miracles that infused Jesus Christ (Luke 4:14, 24:49, Acts 1:8, 2:4). Since the first day, the overwhelming majority of those who had prophetic gifts and miraculous powers were not apostles. Peter explained that it was exactly what was supposed to happen. He referred to the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18). The anointing of the Spirit had spread beyond a few kings and prophets, to Christ and his disciples, and now it would expand in power and scope to all kinds of people, penetrate all levels of society, invade all areas of the world, for all times in the future.

As long as a person has faith in Jesus Christ, then that person can receive the Spirit, and thus the power to receive and perform the miraculous (Acts 2:38-39). The dream of Moses, the oracle of Joel, and the charter of Christ were now being fulfilled. Almost all of those who received power to work miracles were not apostles, even though the Book of Acts highlights the ministry of the apostles. Nevertheless, the Bible leaves us with sufficient testimony concerning the feats of faith and power by this majority group of miracle workers. There is an extensive account of Stephen, a man who was called upon to "wait on tables" (Acts 6:2). He performed "great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). When unbelievers challenged him, "they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke" (Acts 6:10). So they made false charges against him and brought him to trial. As the members of the Sanhedrin looked at Stephen, "they saw that his face was like the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). Was this an apostle, or perhaps two or three apostles combined? Or was this Christ himself? No. He was someone who waited on tables, filled with faith and the Holy Spirit.

He was not an apostle, but God chose him to confront the religious elite. Saul, who would later become Paul the apostle, was also in the audience (Acts 8:1). Can we say that Stephen left no impression on this hardened Pharisee? Can we say that the legendary preacher owed nothing in his travels and writings to this one who waited on tables? It is inconceivable that Paul never remembered Stephen or never attempted to honor the martyr's memory as he pursued excellence in his ministry and endured severe persecution. There is no need for speculation. Let us talk about what we know. We know that the apostles experienced trances and dreams, and sometimes even visitations. Angels visited them in prison and set them free. The Lord Jesus even appeared to them. Impressive. Yet here we see that Stephen, this man who waited on tables, who was never an apostle, received such prophetic powers from the Spirit that he penetrated the heavens of heavens, even to the throne of God, so that without a trance or a dream, wide awake in his body and standing in public before the religious elite, he looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). More than impressive. Then as they stoned him to death, Stephen prayed for them (7:59-60). He was not an apostle, but a first-class hero of faith.

Stephen was killed, and persecution broke out against the church. The Bible says, "All except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria....Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:1, 4). At this turning point, the gospel expanded beyond Jerusalem by Christians who were not apostles. They preached the gospel, and they performed miracles. For example, Philip also waited on tables (Acts 6:5), and he went to Samaria when the disciples scattered. And the Bible says, "When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:6-8). Then an angel told Philip where to go, and the Spirit told him who to meet (Acts 8:26-29). After preaching to an Ethiopian official, the Spirit of God physically took him away and transported him to another location (Acts 8:39-40). We have no record that any apostle experienced something like this. The supernatural works of the Spirit expanded through him to the next generation, for he had four daughters who prophesied -- not one, but four; not sons, but daughters; not proselytized, but prophesied (Acts 21:9).

When Jesus eventually apprehended Paul, he did not send the Christian elite to initiate him, but he sent Ananias. The Bible simply calls him "a disciple" (Acts 9:10). He was an excellent disciple, but still not called an apostle or prophet, or someone with a commanding religious title (Acts 22:12). The Lord spoke to him in a vision, and revealed the street and even the house he must visit, and what he must say once he arrived (Acts 9:11). Ananias wondered about this, knowing what kind of person he was sent to address, so the Lord offered an explanation (Acts 9:13-14). As a mere disciple, he carried a prophetic conversation with the Lord about the most defining apostolic ministry in history. By the hands of this disciple, Paul received his sight again and was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

Later, Paul the apostle would write, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good....What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation" (1

Corinthians 12:7, 14:26). To the Corinthians, he said, "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:5). People are so eager to undermine tongues that they fail to notice what he really said. To these Christians who supposedly misused speaking in tongues, he still insisted, "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues." He did not only say, "I want you to keep allowing it." No, he said, "I want ALL of you to speak in tongues." Keeping in mind that he wanted all of them to speak in tongues, he added that he wanted even more for them to prophesy. He meant that they ought to prefer prophecy only "in the church" or public assembly (1 Corinthians 14:19), and when there was no interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:5). Then he said that they could allow even up to three messages in tongues if someone could interpret (1 Corinthians 14:27), or two or three people could prophesy, "for you can all prophesy one by one" (14:31, ESV)! The supernatural was expected, and participation was encouraged. The apostle refused to permit the expansion of miraculous operations to retreat one step, even in the face of misuse and disorder. He dictated guidelines for them to regulate their meetings and urged them to go right ahead and continue with the gifts. He insisted on increase and expansion.

The Apostates

The debate between cessationism and continuationism is like the debate between atheism and theism. It is not entirely useless, but even when the theist wins, there is only slight progress. Christians cannot be satisfied until the opponent submits to the whole faith of Jesus Christ. The Christian should feel misrepresented if others were to consider him a mere theist. This is how I feel when I am labeled a continuationist, even when there is no malicious intent. I would endure it to keep the interaction simple, but it is in reality so much weaker than what I believe that I take it as slander. It provokes self-examination, and then a familiar realization: "Am I still too restrained in my exposition of the supernatural, or are these people complete morons?" Just because you do not believe the Scripture does not mean that I cannot. I am an expansionist. Mine is a doctrine of the expansionism of the gospel, in every sense specified by Scripture, including the increase of miraculous powers, blessings, and experiences in quantity, in magnitude, in the diversity of believers, to the ends of the earth. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can keep fighting it and damn yourselves to hell, but I will not surrender an inch of this.

Christians have retreated from the doctrine of the gospel. Cessationism is heresy. It is demonism and heathenism, and a declaration of war against the gospel. Continuationism as such is still not the biblical doctrine. It is flaccid. It lacks the spiritual ambition that is inherent in the faith of Jesus Christ. It overlooks the promise and command of the gospel. Expansionism is the only biblical doctrine, and it is the only acceptable view. This elementary revelation is somehow a revolutionary religion even to Christians. You do not need ordination from men to preach the gospel. You do not need training in seminary to heal the sick. You do not need to be male, or young, or popular to receive visions and dreams. You do not need to be wealthy or educated to prophesy. Teaching is good -- the more the better -- not from the traditions of men, but from the word of God. He can use faithful men to build you up in knowledge and character, but do not follow just anyone,

because not everyone has faith. For what good is it, when you receive men's training and approval, they make you twice a son of hell as they are? Have faith in God. Believe the gospel. Then you will receive his Spirit, and you will do these things. Jesus himself will perform the same miracles and even greater miracles through you (John 14:13-14), because if you have faith, he will be your partner in the gospel ministry (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Expansionism should be declared in Christian creeds and prescribed as a test of orthodoxy. Certain aspects of the Christian faith might be as much "gospel" as this doctrine, but none more. As for the debate between cessationism and continuationism, it will persist as long as there are those who resist the gospel, and who love their own theories and excuses. Just as we engage unbelievers with the gospel, although we will not allow them to hold us back from advancing in the faith, we condemn cessationists by the gospel, but we will not allow them to hold us back from moving forward from faith to faith, from glory to glory. At one point, Jesus said to his disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (John 16:12). Even though some people ought to be teachers by now, they still cannot bear what we have to say (Hebrews 5:11-12). Even elementary gospel doctrines are too much for them. There is no reason to accommodate them or to remain with them in a prolonged struggle, when we perceive that there is so much more for us to attain. We must not legitimize a perversion of the gospel by accepting the way this topic has been framed. We make no progress by winning the debate that the power of the gospel merely continues. We ought to feel like chumps for every minute that we are stranded at this level in our conversation. Even continuationism as such is a compromise until we move beyond it to strive for increase and expansion.

2. Scripture: Sufficient Against Cessationism

Although you say that you can perceive no error in the reasoning, your language leaves some distance between you and this argument for cessationism. So I am uncertain if you agree with it, or if you are only asking me about it. For the sake of convenience, I will answer as if you are the one making the argument, so that when I say "you," it might not mean you personally, but a cessationist who uses this objection.

Even if you disagree with the objection, I still hold you responsible for your inability to refute something this absurd, and for failing to even suggest any possible flaw in it. The fact that you have been trained in seminary makes you even more culpable. Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). There is no excuse in failing to raise some of the points that I mention below. Like your cessationist professors, you neglect even the basics of your training, and you leave the burden to me to defend God's power at work in his people. This is unacceptable. If you are convinced of cessationism, then make the case. If you are not convinced, then with all that training, at least make some effort to point out possible flaws in cessationism as you ask me about it.

My reply is not an attack on a straw man. You are the one who sent this argument to me. I draw attention to this because the argument is so stupid, and when I expose how stupid it is, I do not want you to use that lame excuse. Cessationists often complain about a straw man when they lose, and they always lose. Cessationists are STUPID, not misunderstood. They cannot imagine how they could lose so easily and decisively, and so they think they must be misunderstood. But we understand them clearly, and see that they are unbelieving and disobedient fools.

Although not every cessationist uses the same stupid arguments, all their arguments are stupid like this one, and they sometimes contradict one another. I can answer any cessationist argument, but I am answering the one sent to me. No cessationist should complain that this is not his argument. If it is not your argument, then it is not your argument. I have likely answered your own stupid argument elsewhere. Now I am answering the one sent to me, but still, it indeed entails some issues relevant to most cessationist arguments. What I say can be adapted to many cessationist arguments.

[1]

Let us summarize your points. The cessationist argument is based on the sufficiency of Scripture. You claim that a sufficient Bible should render prophecy unnecessary, and if a prophecy only repeats or applies what the Bible says, then it is not prophecy in the biblical sense, but only a reminder of what the Bible says. This is a familiar argument, and therefore I will not repeat all the details. You mention that the Bible says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so

that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This is a significant passage for the doctrine, but your inference is false.

Paul was speaking to Timothy, not to you. Of course, it applies to all of us by extension. The principle applies to all of Scripture and anything that is Scripture, so it is correct to affirm it for our Christian Bible. However, Paul referred to whatever "Scripture" that Timothy had. You cannot make this identical to what you have now -- you have more. You mention that Second Timothy is considered one of the later New Testament documents, but this is irrelevant. To use Paul's statement this way in order to make the "Scripture" in this verse identical to the complete Christian Bible, this must not only be the final document, but it must be the final sentence in Scripture. Moreover, for the "Scripture" in this verse to be identical to what we have, Timothy must have had access to the Christian Bible in its complete form. Unless this was the case, it would be irrelevant even if this is the final sentence of the final document in the Bible. Timothy at least did not have access to Second Timothy while Paul was writing it! In fact, it is likely that Paul had in mind only what Timothy could access in his infancy, since the verse before says, "From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

My point is that the Scripture was already sufficient way before 2 Timothy 3:16-17, but since it was not finished, God continued to write. This is why the sufficiency and the finality of Scripture are two different doctrines. The Christian Bible is not only sufficient to equip us for every good work, but it is more than sufficient for this. Scripture was sufficient before it was complete. If the cessationist uses the sufficiency of Scripture to undermine the continuation of prophecy, he must first use the sufficiency of Scripture to undermine all the Scripture that was produced after Timothy's infancy -- this would include Second Timothy itself. Therefore, to use the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture against the continuation of prophecy is first a repudiation of Scripture. Before any debate about the continuation of anything, the argument would first prevent both the completion and the collection of Scripture. When you do that, from the Christian perspective, you are finished. It is over for you. You are anti-gospel. You are the counter-Christian heretic. Save yourself before you pretend to be a theologian and criticize other people.

By this point, we have already refuted the objection, with the bonus that the cessationist is charged with sin, heresy, a rejection of Scripture, and therefore a renunciation of the Christian faith. We are done, and we can stop here if we wish. But I will take this opportunity to discuss additional problems with the argument.

[2]

The way the cessationist formulates and applies the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture plunges him into all kinds of trouble. Have you even read the rest of Second Timothy? How about 2:21? It says, "If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work." Do you see the problem? "Prepared to do any good work." Does the cessationist even need

the Bible? I can have some fun with this, but we still have a lot to cover, so we will talk about prophecy.

Have you read First Timothy? Paul wrote, "Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience" (1 Timothy 1:18) . And later he wrote, "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Timothy 4:14) . Timothy had studied the Scripture many years before that point (2 Timothy 3:15), a Scripture that Paul declared sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If Timothy never received any prophecy, we would say that he could have lived without it, but he did receive. Prophecy was spoken to Timothy, and Paul told Timothy to use it, to fight the good fight with it. The apostle saw no conflict between this and the sufficiency of Scripture.

[3]

Then, you claim that if prophecy speaks only information that is in the Bible, then it would not be like the kind of prophecy in the early church, but it would be a mere reminder from the Holy Spirit. For now, let us proceed with this limitation, that prophecy will speak only what is in the Bible. Does that mean it cannot be like the kind described in the Bible, the kind experienced by the early disciples?

I know someone who started preaching when he was sixteen, right away to people who were thirty-five to seventy-five. He would teach about many topics from the Bible, and counsel these adults about anything from parenting, drug abuse, to sexual dysfunction, having never experienced these things. He had never been taught how to interpret the Bible, how to preach, or even how to make an outline. He learned, but God helped him begin. When he prepared a message, he would sometimes see a vision of the complete outline, and he would copy it down and use it. Sometimes he would see a vision of himself speaking in an upcoming service, and when the time came, he would just act out what he saw. Every time it was accurate and biblical. He started in ministry soon after his conversion, and so he still had not read the entire Bible. Sometimes when he was preaching or counseling, or answering hecklers, he would recite whole biblical passages that he had never read, because he would read them off from a vision as he spoke. The people thought he had memorized the passages, but sometimes that would be the first time he read them.

In one of his meetings, while the people started to arrive and waited for him, he was praying in another place in the building. Two people in the audience were talking to each other about a certain biblical topic, and one of them asked the other a series of questions. Then the preacher came out to speak. About ten minutes into his sermon, he suddenly stopped and turned to the two people. He looked at them and spent several minutes to address a different topic, and then returned to his sermon. It looked like a digression. Later, he was told that he answered the questions that the person asked his friend before the service, in the same order that he asked them. There were a number of other cases. In every case, the man said nothing that was not already in the Bible, but it was an evident manifestation of

the prophetic, and it had the effect that prophecy ought to produce: "The secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (1 Corinthians 14:25). Therefore, even when prophecy is limited to the information in the Bible, it does not necessarily mean that it is a mere reminder of biblical teaching, but it can have the same striking effect as when Jesus said to Nathaniel, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you" (John 1:48).

[4]

This is to show that the point betrays your spiritual ignorance (1 Corinthians 12:1), but the truth is that it also puts you in a lot of trouble. If prophecy that contains no information other than what is already in the Bible is not the kind of prophecy demonstrated in the Bible, then this can be turned against the Bible itself. Many propositions in the Bible repeat the same words or ideas contained in previous portions of the Bible. How many times could a person say "His mercy endures forever" before it stopped being prophetic (Psalm 118)? According to you, the second time was already different. When Jesus preached in Nazareth, he read from Isaiah 61 before he added, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." According to you, Luke 4:18-19 was not prophetic, but at best a Spirit-prompted reminder, but Luke 4:21 was prophetic, because it was new information. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he cited from Joel 2 and several other places. According to you, major portions of his sermon were not prophetic, but only Spirit-prompted reminders.

What about all the other times that Jesus quoted Scripture? What about all the other times that the apostles copied Scripture in their letters? According to you, only their expositions and other revelations were inspired, but their quotations of existing Scripture were not. If we also discard those parts where the Bible repeats its own ideas even if not the exact words, then the cessationist Bible becomes even thinner. For example, regardless of the words used, only the first time the Bible asserts the deity of Christ would be prophetic. All subsequent instances would be mere reminders. This means that the cessationist who uses this argument denies hundreds of portions of Scripture, relegating them to unnecessary reminders. On the other hand, I say that all the times that the Bible repeats its own words and ideas are inspired and prophetic.

The cessationist makes at least three attacks against Scripture in this one argument that supposedly defends Scripture. First, contrary to the Bible's own claim, he declares that the Bible was never sufficient until completion. Second, because the Bible indeed declares itself sufficient before completion, but the cessationist claims that anything that is beyond sufficient is unnecessary, and not in the same class as biblical prophecy, he declares that all portions of Scripture produced after what Timothy had in his infancy are unnecessary and uninspired. Third, because he claims that prophecy that repeats the information contained in Scripture as in a different or lower class than the prophecy of Scripture, or even not prophecy at all, he declares that all portions of Scripture that repeat the words or ideas that were already contained in previous portions of Scripture are unnecessary and uninspired. Any one of these offenses, if made clear to a cessationist, and if he refuses to repent, is a sufficient basis for excommunication.

[5]

I asked if you have read First and Second Timothy, and it seems that you have not. But have you even read the verse you used? Let us read it again: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Oh, you are in so much trouble.

You use this to supposedly defend Scripture, but what good is it if you refuse to do what Scripture says? Paul said that Scripture is useful for teaching, not just so that you can argue that it is useful for teaching, but so that you would start teaching it. What good is it, if you declare that Scripture is useful for teaching, and then you turn around and teach atheism? He said that it is useful for training in righteousness, not just so that you can argue that it can serve this purpose, but so that you would start training in righteousness. What good is it, if you declare that Scripture is useful for training in righteousness, and then you turn around and train in murder and adultery? You would be like one who looks in a mirror. You see what you are like, and you see what you need to do. But the moment you turn around, you forget all about it, and you carry on with your own ideas and goals. This happens over and over again in your studies, conversations, and religious activities. You think you are spiritual and faithful to Scripture, just because you are constantly engaging the word of God, but you are not a doer of the word of God. You deceive yourself (James 1:22-25).

Scripture is sufficient "for every good work." What are these good works? Do you even care? You never thought about this, huh? For this verse to put a stop to prophecy, it must exclude prophecy as a good work. However, Scripture explicitly declares prophecy as good. Acts 2 says that God's Spirit is poured out, and as a result, this would produce visions, dreams, and prophecies in his people (v. 16-18). And Peter said that this same "gift of the Holy Spirit" -- the Spirit that produces visions, dreams, and prophecies -- would remain available for future generations, "for all whom the Lord our God will call" (v. 38-39). Paul instructed even the unstable Corinthians to desire spiritual gifts, and in their context, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1). He added, "Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues" (1 Corinthians 14:39). Scripture is sufficient to offer a basis for prophecy, and it is sufficient so that there is no excuse to avoid or forbid it.

[6]

The cessationist is in much more trouble than this. The argument opposes prophecy on the basis of the sufficiency of Scripture, but prophecy is not the only good work that the cessationist refuses to perform. What about healing the sick? I do not say praying about the sick, but healing them. The Bible does not tell us to pray about the sick, and then see what

happens. The Bible tells us to heal the sick by God's power, to pray for them so that they will receive healing, so that they will no longer be sick (James 5:15). Why do you care that the Scripture is sufficient for good works, if you refuse to perform the good works that it commands? Should you not be shamed by the doctrine of sufficiency, and too embarrassed to mention it, instead of using it to undermine others?

You refer to John 14:26, that the Spirit can remind us of what Scripture teaches. Now let the Spirit remind you of what Jesus said only several verses before this: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). Jesus said that Christians will do the same works and greater works, and I have shown elsewhere that he referred to miracles (John 14:11). Scripture is sufficient to equip you to perform these works, but if the sufficiency of Scripture is only an idea to you, or only a tool for debate, or an excuse for unbelief, then what good is it? Man, it is wasted on you! What about Matthew 21:21? Jesus said that if you have faith, you can command even a mountain to move out of the way. Instead of arguing about it, why don't you take that and help deliver someone from their oppression? It is wasted on you! The Bible says, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." Why don't you teach this to someone so that he can receive healing? It is sufficient to bring healing. But it is wasted on you!

[7]

You mention something about preaching the gospel on the basis that the Bible teaches it, but the Bible also teaches you to heal the sick and prophesy. But if you refuse to obey the Bible on these things, why do you need to obey it when it tells you to preach? To you, the Bible is sufficient, but not authoritative. You are not only selective about what you accept from the Bible, but selective about how you apply this doctrine of sufficiency. You use the sufficiency of Scripture, not as a basis for faith and instruction, but as leverage for argument, in order to defend and justify yourself. You disobedient and hypocritical swine! Why do you call him Lord, but refuse to do what he says (Luke 4:46)? The Bible calls this a sufficient basis for damnation, but even if we pretend that it is not, it is at least a sufficient basis for excommunication (Matthew 7:23).

If the Bible is sufficient, then do what it says. If the Bible is sufficient, then believe what it promises. If the Bible is sufficient, then you should not need someone like me to KICK you in order to make you believe and obey what it says. If the assumption is that, if the Bible is sufficient, then we do not need prophecy, even if the same Bible commands prophecy, then this can apply to other things that the Bible commands, and even more to things that the Bible does not command. It can apply to preaching, to ordination, to churches and denominations, creeds and councils, and to seminaries. You may say that these help me to follow the Bible, but if the Bible is sufficient, then I do not truly need these things, do I? If the sufficiency of the Bible still allows me to refuse what it commands – this is what you say – then how much more can I refuse what it does not command? How can you justify your creeds, denominations, and seminaries? If I can read the Bible, and it is sufficient, why do I need to listen to you preach? Why do you preach? Is it because the

Bible tells you to "preach the word"? The Bible tells you to do a whole bunch of things that you refuse to do, that you reject even in principle, so what right do you have to tell me anything?

[8]

This is the heart of cessationism -- unbelief and defiance. The Bible is a sufficient basis to condemn any cessationist person, refute any cessationist creed, disband any cessationist denomination, defrock any cessationist minister, and terminate any cessationist professor. If the cessationist wishes to use the sufficiency of Scripture to take one thing away from me, then I will use the same doctrine, the way he uses it, to take away everything from him. If you want to cancel out what the Bible teaches on prophecy, then I will cancel out your salvation. If you want to cancel out what the Bible teaches on healing, then I will cancel out your denomination. I can single-handedly destroy all his practices, all his doctrines, all his creeds, all his churches and denominations, all his seminaries -- everything. All he is left with is cessationism -- a doctrine of what God does not do for him and what he cannot do for God. With nothing but the Bible, I have sufficient authority to demand the repentance of any person or group, and if this is refused, to demand expulsion or dissolution. I have no power to coerce, but the Bible is sufficient, so when I make a biblical case, it is a case with sufficient weight, so that it is God's word to them, and he will hold the people accountable when they disobey what I say from the Bible. This is how much I believe in the sufficiency of Scripture.

If you defend a Scripture that you refuse to obey, then Scripture is only a monument, a decoration. It is a symbol and a slogan, and not the word of God. Just as the cessationist has turned against Scripture, Scripture has turned against the cessationist. The sufficiency of Scripture is not a refuge for the apostate, but it is a reminder of his hatred of God. The cessationist argument based on the sufficiency of Scripture backfires against him, because it demonstrates the fact that he is selective about what he accepts from Scripture, that he has made up his mind apart from Scripture as to what he will believe and perform. The cessationist conspires with Satan and tries to turn Scripture against Scripture, and against God himself. The Pharisees claimed that they revered the Scripture, but when the word of God came as a person, it tested them and exposed them, and they killed him in the name of Scripture. What good is it, if you claim that you would go all over the world to preach the gospel on the basis of biblical command, but then you make the people twice the children of hell as you! Precisely because the Scripture is sufficient, I will uphold what it teaches and promises. I will conspire with Scripture against the cessationist.

We affirm again that we believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. The Bible is sufficient for defining and teaching doctrine, for correction, counseling, training, and equipping us for every good work. Therefore, in principle, it is not "necessary" for God to teach anyone doctrine or provide anyone direction by what we call supernatural revelation. If a person has perfect knowledge of Scripture and perfect obedience to Scripture, then in principle this person's life would please God, and he would never commit sin. We agree that no one has perfect knowledge or perfect obedience, but the point is that Scripture is sufficient, so

that there is no excuse for ignorance or disobedience. It is possible for a person to go through life and make his decisions based on the Bible alone. He might never receive a prophecy and still make the right decisions. In this sense, the Bible is sufficient and other things are unnecessary, but the fact that these things are unnecessary does not mean that they are wrong or that they have ceased.

To use another illustration, in principle, it is possible for a person to never become sick. One day when he is very old, he will fall asleep and his spirit will return to God. For him, healing is unnecessary, but this says nothing about whether healing is available, or whether it is right or wrong. Many people never received prophecy, but many people never accepted the Scripture that they claim to live by and to defend. When God reveals to us more than what is sufficient because of his grace, they even turn his grace against his grace, and use his doctrine to suppress his power. This is the damnable demonic legacy of cessationism.

From: email

3. Especially Prophecy

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. (1 Corinthians 14:1)

The verse is often understood to mean that Paul favors prophecy above other spiritual abilities. Ministries that are inclined toward prophecy rejoice over it, and they use this apostolic endorsement to fuel their movement. Then there are those who take anything that they can find to undermine speaking in tongues, even though Paul repeatedly praises tongues in the same context. It is difficult to make sense of an apparent exclusive preference for prophecy. It puzzles even some of those who have faith to operate in spiritual gifts and who are not prejudiced against them. Those who assume that this is the apostle's meaning and who simply accept it either lack aptitude to perceive the problem, or they themselves prefer prophecy anyway.

Jesus performed more healing miracles than other kinds of miracles. When he sent out disciples, he commanded them to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. He did not place emphasis on prophecy. When he began his ministry, he announced that he would preach the gospel and heal the sick (Luke 4:18-19). Although he prophesied, he did not include it in his ministry constitution. When he described his ministry to John the Baptist, he said that he healed the sick, healed the sick, healed the sick, healed the sick, healed the sick -- he said it five times in different ways -- and that he preached the gospel (Matthew 11:5). Although he prophesied, he did not mention it in his ministry description. When Peter recalled the ministry of Jesus, he said that the Lord went about healing the sick (Acts 10:38), and he said that the Lord gained such a reputation for this that even the Gentiles knew it (Acts 10:36-37). Although he prophesied, it was not emphasized in his ministry reputation. Healing was in his ministry constitution, description, and reputation.

We must not lift up healing to put down prophecy. Jesus was a prophet, and he prophesied in his teaching, to individuals, and about Israel, the nations, the church, and the future of the world. He demonstrated so much prophetic powers that he became known as a prophet even during his short ministry, but he was known even more for his miracles of healing. His ministry was explicitly defined by healing even more than prophecy, and certainly no less than prophecy. When we consider the ministries of the apostles and other disciples, we notice the same thing. The Gospels and the Acts do not exhibit a preference for prophecy. If there is a preference, they favor the ministry of healing. This is true not only when Jesus and the apostles were preaching to unbelievers and outsiders. Many of the miracles of healing occurred when people came to them in faith. It was not that they developed faith because they received miracles of healing, but they received the miracles of healing because they exercised faith. Many of the miracles of healing were given to those who believed and followed Jesus. For example, Lazarus and his sisters were close friends of the Lord. In fact, Jesus said that healing was bread for the children of the covenant (Matthew 15:26). He said that the children of Abraham ought to receive healing (Luke 13:16), and of

course, we are the children of Abraham through faith (Galatians 3:7). Thus we cannot claim that healing was given prominence because it was a tool for evangelism or to authenticate the gospel, because it was given even more prominence among believers.

Again, the apostles demonstrated a similar pattern. From the start, Peter announced that Christians would be prophetic people, receiving visions, dreams, and prophecies, and indeed their prophetic experiences were constant (Acts 2:17-18). Nevertheless, they were known even more for their miracles of healing the sick and casting out demons (Acts 8:6-8). People lined up the streets to receive healing miracles through them, not to receive personal prophecies (Acts 5:15). Of course many miracles of healing occurred as they preached to unbelievers and outsiders, but the miracles of healing among believers and insiders were just as powerful, if not more powerful. Paul raised someone from the dead while he spoke at a meeting of believers (Acts 20:9-12). James said that miracles of healing are to benefit believers, and not only to attract unbelievers. He asked the believers, "Is any one of you sick?" He said that church elders should pray for the sick by faith, and the Lord will heal them (James 5:14-15). On the other hand, when he addressed those who are suffering, he gave them a teaching about Job, as to what this man finally received from the Lord (James 5:11). God gave him health and wealth, healing and prosperity (Job 42:10-17). We know that prophecy indeed has the ability to strengthen and encourage (1 Corinthians 14:3), but James taught the suffering one from the Bible, instead of prescribing prophecy from one of the church elders. The point is that the Bible does not place prophecy above all other gifts, and if it grants any miraculous ministry the preeminence, it arguably offers healing the first place.

Returning to Paul, what he appears to say in 1 Corinthians 14:1 -- what some people think he means -- would not make sense even in the context of the letter. One reason he wrote it in the first place was to address the spirit of division and competition in the church. The people were saying, "I follow Paul," and "I follow Apollo," and "I follow Peter" (1:11-12, 3:3-4). If this sounds familiar, it is because Christians have never stopped doing this. Why? Paul explains that it is because they are spiritual infants (3:1-2). It seems that one of the items that divided them was how they understood and exercised spiritual gifts. The apostle declares that although there are different kinds of gifts, functions, and ministries, they come from the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God. Christians should not be divided by their different manifestations of God's grace and power, but they should be united by their common faith in Jesus Christ. He likens the congregation to a body. It is one unit, but it is made up of many parts. Every part is needed, every part has a role, and every part is related to other parts, so that when one part suffers, every part suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12).

Then Paul teaches that, more than desire, love is a more excellent way to operate in spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 13). A cessationist who teaches love from 1 Corinthians 13 is even more hypocritical than an atheist who teaches faith from Hebrews 11. The chapter is not about love as such, but how love relates to spiritual gifts. You cannot interpret the Bible correctly if you remove the essence of a passage. The Bible will not sanction a theology that has no God in it. God is not a monument, but a living and working divine person (John 5:17). Just as an atheist who teaches faith from Hebrews 11 would condemn himself, since

the chapter testifies against him (Hebrews 11:6), the cessationist who teaches love from 1 Corinthians 13 condemns himself, because the chapter refers to a love that operates in spiritual gifts "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). It is a love that is sandwiched between the unity of love (1 Corinthian 12) and the order of love (1 Corinthians 14), which -- love -- is the reason or motive for operating in spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 13). Thus the chapter testifies against the cessationist, showing that he has no love, but only hate for the church and for the gospel.

Desire for spiritual gifts is good, and Paul hastens to affirm it immediately after he talks about love, but when believers are entangled by jealousy and division, love is what they need to learn. Love is more excellent not only from the perspective of morality, but it is also superior from the perspective of ministry. Our desires are narrow and limited. One man may desire a ministry of healing above all else, and has little interest in tongues. Another might be zealous for speaking in tongues, but thinks nothing of delivering a word of wisdom. Both of them overlook the spectacular gift of faith. Desire is often restricted by our self-perception. A person might have faith to operate a business for the glory of God and to support the church, but he is crippled with fear when it comes to healing the sick. But love is broad and strong. Love esteems the heart of God and the needs of others. The one who walks in love desires spiritual gifts, and he desires the gifts so that he can deliver and edify people. So when he sees someone with a need, he would not care if he seems to lack the gift to address that need. Love drives out fear (1 John 4:18). He would trust God and reach out to help that person anyway, and when he does, he would find that God comes on the scene and performs the work. Once given, God does not remove his grace, and thus a new ministry is born.

After all of this, is it possible that Paul would suddenly favor one gift above others (1 Corinthians 14:1)? He would then engage in that which he has just opposed. No, it is not possible. Would he withhold his endorsement from every faction -- Paul, Apollo, Peter, healing, tongues, and so on -- only to throw his whole support behind a prophecy faction? Would he do such a thing right after all that talk about unity and love? No, he would not do this. Therefore, it is impossible that Paul intends to specify prophecy as the supreme spiritual gift. He means something else by the statement, and to grasp what he means, we need to examine the rest of 1 Corinthian 14. It does not take much. Even a brief review would suffice, because the matter is obvious. Read 1 Corinthians 14. Throughout the chapter, Paul compares prophecy and tongues, in the process giving us the impression that the Corinthians had an issue with disorderly and uninterpreted tongues in public assembly. Since the Corinthians were fond of speaking gifts (1 Corinthians 1:5), the best course would be for them to devote more attention to prophecy, so that they could exercise a speaking gift that was always intelligible.

Consider the apostle's solution. It indicates the place that spiritual gifts must occupy in the congregation. He obviously regards division and disorder as severe issues. Even then, he never suggested that the believers should suspend the exercise of spiritual gifts, not even as a temporary measure. And although it seems there was a problem with a disorderly use of tongues, he never suggested that they should suspend even this one ministry. Rather, he proposes prophecy. He does not mean that prophecy is the best gift compared to all other

gifts, but that prophecy is better for them compared only to tongues, only in public assembly, and only when there is no interpretation. The three conditions are crucial, so that the principle does not hold if any of them does not apply. Prophecy is not superior when the other gifts are included. Prophecy is not even superior to tongues when we leave the public assembly. Prophecy is not superior to tongues even in public assembly when there is an interpretation.

This is Paul's answer in the face of an apparent abuse of speaking in tongues. Spiritual gifts must not cease. The church must not suspend even one gift, not even as a temporary measure against abuse. Supernatural abilities must persist in an orderly operation in the congregation. How does the apostle address an abuse of gifts? He adds more gifts to bring balance. Theologians are fond of listing the signs of a true church. Of course, they list the signs that they think their group possesses. They include things that they can control and counterfeit -- preaching, sacraments, church discipline -- but they exclude things that only God can perform, so that they would not be exposed as frauds. Since Paul was insistent on the operation of spiritual gifts to the point that he would not suspend even the one gift that was abused, the operation of spiritual gifts must also be a sign of the true church, without which a congregation must be condemned. God works in the true church in an evident manner, in a manner that the Bible promises and prescribes (Acts 2:17-18, 39; Galatians 3:5; James 5:15; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, 27, 14:26). Paul refused to suspend even one of the supernatural gifts, so how can a congregation be a true church, if it allows or receives none of the supernatural gifts? Now that burning sensation in your heart, O traditionalist, that growing indignation, that gnashing of teeth, O cessationist, is the realization that I am correct -- about ALL of this -- and that you are in a false denomination and a false church! Ichabod in your face!

There is a lesson here for us who believe the gospel and who operate in spiritual gifts. The principle is that the supernatural ministries are so essential that we must not suspend even the gift that is misused in the congregation, even if it is only one gift. Rather, the solution is to regulate its use, and to increase attention on what balances it. We add more gifts, seek more miracles, receive more blessings, and pursue more abilities and ministries. We can apply the principle to every aspect of the church. Suppose a congregation maintains a strong teaching ministry, but it has not produced a new convert in fifteen years. We should wonder if the teaching ministry is that strong in the first place, but let us leave that alone for now. The solution would be for this church to continue their ministry of teaching, and to pursue all ministries, but especially the ministry of evangelism. This would not suggest that we favor evangelism more than teaching, or that we think evangelism is superior to every other operation in the church, but it is what this church needs to emphasize. This is what Paul intends when he says, "especially prophecy."

Let us say more about speaking in tongues. Paul's endorsement of prophecy cannot be used to undermine tongues in any way, because in the same context, the apostle repeatedly praises speaking in tongues. He makes a contrast between prophecy and tongues because he has a specific purpose in mind, but when we examine his statements about speaking in tongues itself, we find that he has only good things to say. In fact, the apostle appears enamored with tongues. He says that the one who speaks in tongues utters mysteries to

God and builds up himself (14:2, 4). He says that when he prays in a tongue, he prays in the spirit, and so he will pray with his spirit and sing with his spirit (14:14-15). He says that when a person offers thanks to God with his spirit, he does it well (14:16-17). Most Christians cannot offer thanks well even in their native language, if they offer thanks at all, but they spurn a way to offer excellent thanks to God directly from their spirits.

Paul is not finished. He thanks God that he speaks in tongues even more than the Corinthians (14:18). He applies the words of the prophets to speaking in tongues (14:21), and says that tongues are a sign to unbelievers (14:22). It is ironic that those who undermine tongues would sometimes use this statement to do it. Can they not see that both Paul and the Corinthians enjoy tongues very much? Can they not see that both Paul and the Corinthians believe very much in the spiritual gifts? Isaiah was speaking to apostate Israel, or "believers" who were really "unbelievers" (Isaiah 28:11-12), thus the prophecy could apply to those inside the church. If these people refuse to believe and operate in the spiritual gifts, and if they undermine speaking in tongues, then they are the "unbelievers" in this context, and the proliferation of speaking in tongues in the world is a sign from God to them, to condemn their unbelief and awake them to truth. But as the prophet said, "Through men of strange tongues, I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me" (14:21). Busted! Even then these "Christians" and cessationists will not listen to God. What does it take? Those who hijack 1 Corinthians 14 to undermine speaking in tongues are especially incompetent and dishonest, and deserve our fierce condemnation.

He says that speaking in tongues matches prophecy even in public assembly when it is accompanied by interpretation (14:5). He favors prophecy only in public assembly, and only when there is no interpretation for the tongues. If there is interpretation, the two are equivalent. As much as people exalt intelligible speech at the expense of tongues, speaking in tongues immediately rises to the same level in public assembly when it comes with interpretation. So if they wish to deprecate tongues, they should first deprecate prophecy and preaching, and thus further condemn themselves. Otherwise, they make room for tongues to collect the praise that they shower upon intelligible speech. Paul expects a believer to come to church with "a tongue or an interpretation" (14:26) just as much as he expects one to come with "a hymn, or a word of instruction" (14:26). In fact, he anticipates up to three messages in tongues in a single meeting (14:27). He concludes, "Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues" (14:39). According to his description of speaking in tongues, it is an explosion of spiritual blessings in private use, but he says to allow it even in public assembly.

Paul declares, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (14:37-38, ESV). Keep in mind what the apostle has said about the use of prophecy, the value of tongues, the participation of believers in the miraculous, the principles of church order, and so on. If a person does not accept what the apostle says about prophecy, tongues, and spiritual gifts as a doctrine and command from Jesus Christ, then the church must not offer this person recognition. The context pertains to the assembly of the church and the exercise of the ministry, so even though it relates to prophecy, tongues, and so on, it also relates to ministries of worship and instruction (14:26). In other

words, a person who does not accept what we have stated above about prophecy, tongues, and spiritual gifts no longer has a biblical basis to expect any recognition in the church for any public ministry. He should not be permitted to preach as a pastor or teach as a professor. Christians should not offer him recognition. The church should not accept him, employ him, ordain him, graduate him, publish him, or listen to him. The church and the seminary belong in the public sphere. Thus if a pastor declares that prophecy and the other spiritual gifts have passed away, he should be defrocked and removed from any public recognition. If a professor teaches cessationism, or something against healing the sick or speaking in tongues, he should be terminated from his position, and any academic degree should be revoked. Christians must withdraw public recognition from him. This is a direct command from Paul the apostle and Christ the Lord.

What about the churches and seminaries? What about their creeds? What about their denominations? If they stand against Christ on this, they no longer have any basis to exist. Like the Pharisees, they resort to mutual approval. They confer honor on one another, and they call one another orthodox. They ordain one another, but they have no anointing from the Spirit. They attribute their existence to divine providence, but their entire system consists of them holding up one another in midair. Of course their creeds are orthodox -- their theologians say so! Of course their theologians are orthodox -- their seminaries say so! Of course their seminaries are orthodox -- their denominations say so! And of course their denominations are orthodox -- their creeds say so! This is the way they maintain everything in their traditions. As God said, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jeremiah 2:13). No prophet is without honor except in his hometown. Paul himself faced contempt from the people of his generation. All reformers in their times are heretics to some people. If they disagree with anything I say, just wait a hundred years or so. Perhaps by then it would be explained by divine providence, and it would be the standard of orthodoxy. Perhaps by then their children would be my chief defenders, and would claim that they have supported me from the start! God is irrelevant to them. Scripture has nothing to do with it. Tradition is their God. History is their orthodoxy. Why? They are sinful, and they are stupid.

Considering Paul's verdict on the matter, even I have been inexcusably tolerant toward cessationists and the "unbelievers" of what Scripture teaches about spiritual gifts and our participation in the miraculous. Although my approach has been criticized as abusive, the truth is that I have offered these people excessive courtesy, and I have not been ruthless enough toward them. What about you? Are you one of those worthless morons who complain that I have been too harsh, and who discuss these matters with self-righteous detachment, when you should have been doing your part to demolish the opposition by the Lord's command? You will not change, will you? Why? You are a religious phony. You wish to believe your own ideas and live your own goals in the name of religion. You come to God with your mouth, but you stay far from him in your heart. You have never accepted the doctrines of Christ, but only the traditions of men. On the other hand, if we indeed believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, then let us pursue all the gifts out of love, especially those that increase our usefulness, especially those that edify more people in our context, and especially those that enhance our spiritual balance, so that we may be equipped for the

work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

4. God's Word is God's Will

God's word is God's will. Focus on what he has already said. As long as you leave it up to some unknown will of God, you will not pray in faith. When you do this, you tell yourself that you respect his sovereignty, but the truth is that you despise his revelation. You will keep wishing for deliverance, not believing for it and receiving it. The Bible says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). You are the one who resists the devil, not someone else. And the devil will flee from you, not from someone else. Relative to the problems we face, God often speaks as if we are the ones who decide, as if we are the ones in control. God promises that if we will have faith, we will receive what we want. He promises that if we will resist, we will overcome the enemy. He leaves no room for uncertainty, and no room for a different doctrine.

The Bible says, "When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.'" (Matthew 8:16-17). Healing is not something that happens at random or that is decided on a case-by-case basis. Jesus already took your infirmities and he already bore your sicknesses. Healing belongs to you. It is too late for anyone to withhold it from you. Don't keep praying and hoping that God will decide you help you. Instead, affirm what Jesus has done and tell that thing to leave you. Something like this should not take hours and days and weeks. You do not have to put up with it. And it should not take many people to pray. You can tell it to leave by yourself.

From: email

5. Liberation from Unbelief

I especially like your last paragraph: "It's so liberating to have left that church." After you had sat under unbelief for a while, you started to say, "It's not so bad." But when you finally left, you started to say, "It's so liberating." Remember the difference. Never again allow yourself to remain in an unbelieving environment until you say, "It's not so bad." When you begin to say that, the devil has taken you out. He has neutered you. You are no longer a light of the gospel, and you are no longer a threat to the darkness in this world. They say, "No church is perfect," as if you should settle, but you have experienced what happens to you when you do that. It did not turn out well. Remember how you suffered. It is far better to not attend any church at all than to attend a church of unbelief. You must cling to faith and forsake all else. Seeing you confess this sense of liberation is better news to me than if you have found a good church. But it would happen again if you force yourself to attend a cessationist church and keep telling yourself it does not matter.

If your spouse lags behind spiritually, you must still move forward. If you keep growing, you will be in a better position to help. Settle clearly in your mind the various topics. With something like healing, decide why it is wrong to say that it happens "if it is God's will." Your spouse never says, "I know that God promised salvation to anyone who has faith in Christ, but even when there is faith, it happens only if it is God's will. So it is possible for someone to have more faith than Jesus himself and still be damned to hell." Your spouse never says this. But the healing of the body stands on the same basis as the forgiveness of sin — the atonement (Matthew 8:17). Therefore, for someone to say that healing happens only "if it is God's will" regardless of our faith is also a logical repudiation of salvation by faith. In principle, this person cannot be a Christian. The least we can say is that there is a gross inconsistency, and it comes from unbelief. It is the opposite of reverence for God's will. God was the one who sovereignly sent Jesus to bare our sins and diseases.

From: email

6. Hypocrisy in Christian Counseling

He is considered the founder of the biblical counseling movement. A foundational principle of his approach is that the Bible is sufficient to address the whole man. He complains that Christians would preach about the salvation of the soul from the Bible, but when speaking to people with psychological problems, they would either refer them to non-Christian therapists or counsel them with non-Christian methods.

However, he himself teaches that when counseling someone who is suffering from something like depression, we should ascertain whether the cause is psychological or physiological. If the depression is psychological, then the Christian counselor should speak to this person from the Bible. But if the depression is physiological, perhaps due to a hormonal imbalance, then the counselor should refer the person to a physician. He does not suggest that the Bible is also sufficient to address problems that are physiological, and that we should have faith in God to miraculously heal the person of this chemical imbalance, even though the Bible prescribes miracle healing by its many promises and examples.

This cessationist hypocrisy injects a devastating deformity into a counseling system that claims to be biblical. He is most likely unaware of it. He does not think that there is anything wrong. The unbelief is so ingrained that he takes this policy for granted, while he criticizes others for doing the same thing. Since this assumption of cessationism affects how he deals with every counselee at every stage with every issue, the damage is incalculable. All those who are like him are culpable for hindering the gospel in their counselees, in the church, and in the world. Cessationism steers people away from the gospel. It tells people to believe in Christ, but then refuses to let them have him.

Counseling that is "biblical" does not mean that you only discuss the ideas in the Bible, and even then suppressing many of them, but it means that you also invoke the promises of the Bible. What the Bible promises should happen in your interaction with the counselees.

If a person lives in fear because he has a disease, we should not only confront his fear as sin, command him to repent, and then teach him to trust in God. This approach sounds good to a point, but it is also a lie, because in this situation, to trust God would mean to receive healing by faith. Counseling would entail commanding that disease to leave the person, or teaching the person to do it himself. His strong insistence on counseling from the Bible, without faith, becomes strong hypocrisy in practice, because he defies the same Bible that he claims to teach and trust.

Then, many people need to sit under long-term preaching that contains sound doctrine and much faith — more and more faith — more than they need individual counseling. Some people need counseling to tell them that they should stop thinking that they need counseling. They should listen to some good preaching, and be doers of the word. This is

the problem, both in the counselors and in the counselees. They honor the Bible with their lips, but they refuse to do what it says.

From: email

7. The Congregational Healing Mandate

[13] Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

[14] Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15] And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. [16] Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

[17] Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. [18] Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. (James 5:13-18)

You asked, "Would James 5:13-18 be considered a congregational ministry or simply the confession and forgiveness of private individuals to each other?" As usual, pay attention to the context of the passage. Verse 13 refers to how one relates to God, not to other believers. Verse 14 sharply turns the focus to healing and continues all the way to verse 16. Then verses 17 and 18 follow the same vein in referring to miracles, expanding the topic to miracles of nature and miraculous answers to prayer in general.

Therefore, the topic is miracle healing, not confession and forgiveness among people. Miracle healing comes in several ways, and this passage refers to one way, that is, when the sick asks for prayer from church elders (v. 14) and other believers (v. 16). Verse 15 says that if this sick person has sinned, he will be forgiven. Verse 16 says to confess your sins "so that you may be healed." This is the only reason the confession of sins is introduced. James is talking about the confession of sins only when a person's sins are related to his desire for healing. If he has committed no sin related to his sickness, then confession does not apply.

Verse 16 describes a situation that would arise sometimes, but far from always. A person might come and ask me to pray for his healing. In the course of our discussion, he might finally admit, "I confess that I have dabbled in the occult, and I think this has something to do with my sickness, or it has been hindering me from obtaining healing. Now I admit that I have sinned, and I renounce the occult." His sin might be adultery, or bitterness, or something else. He confesses his sin before me, but not because he has wronged me, and not because I am the one who forgives him. No, he confesses his sin before me because this happens in the context of his seeking healing from God by faith with my prayer and counsel. After this, I can pray for him and we can have the confidence that God forgives him and heals him.

Then, notice again that verses 17 and 18 continue to talk about miracles, not confession and forgiveness, expanding the topic to include even miracles of nature. Thus the passage

is misused unless it is used to teach that all members of the congregation should request miracles, dispense miracles, and experience miracles, especially miracles of healing. It is a gross degradation and perversion of Scripture to use the text as a basis for some congregational ministry or event where the members confess their sins and forgive one another. Compared to the actual purpose, it would be a lame and grotesque use of the text. As long as there is no expectation and demonstration of miracle healing — such as cancers disappearing, cripples coming out of wheelchairs — the church defies the command of Christ.

From: email

8. God's Extravagant Blessings

If you are disgusted when they teach about an extravagant God, as if he is not like this, then the moment that you do anything for your children that is beyond what is necessary, even feeding them more food than they need to survive, that very moment you either declare that you are a better parent than God, or you declare that you hate your children and wish to harm them. You would be a hypocrite. But tradition and unbelief blind people, and make them think that they are better than others who shamelessly receive from a generous God.

Jesus said that the kingdom of God belongs to children, not religious connoisseurs, and certainly not those who think that they are better than God. We must be disturbed and alarmed when we fail to think of God as a generous parent. Do we glorify God when we bless him? God glorifies himself even more when he blesses us. Christian ministers who teach this are often far from perfect, and subject to many criticisms, but this does not invalidate the point. Why do you think God allows many of these teachers to be so flawed and unrefined? He places a stumbling block to trip up those who walk in religious pride, who thumb their noses at those who do not present the promises of God in the way they like.

God will put his blessings right in front of them, and they will fail to receive. This is his way to withhold the gospel from the unbelieving and hard-hearted. As Isaiah said, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." Paul said that God uses the lowly and despised to bring down the things that appear high and mighty, so that no one can boast before him.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is too often used to destroy faith, but it should boost our faith to new heights. God does not sovereignly break his own promises, but he will sovereignly do more than what we ask or think. False teachings that replace true sacrifice for the gospel with unnecessary everyday suffering are degrading and destructive. They have resulted in so much weakness in the church and disdain for God in the world. We would benefit by constantly thinking about truths that build up faith in God's goodness and generosity, since this is against the current both in the church and in the world.

We must muster all our strength and courage to condemn those who oppose God's blessings. Even more than the non-Christians, they are the enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course, many of them are indeed non-Christians. The fact that they try to look like teachers and friends of the gospel makes them that much more dangerous. If they refuse to listen, then we must beat them down with the word of God, and liberate God's people from their abuse.

From: email

9. Call Them Donut Heroes

I recently read your article, "The Ultimate Anti-Christ Doctrine," and I have some questions on the topic.

Do you consider continuationism as an article of biblical faith? If so, could you provide some verses that explicitly affirm that the apostles believed that the miracles they were performing would be done by other Christians ages in the future?

I don't think many cessationists have a problem with God revealing himself through apparitions or by prophecy. The problem is any kind of spiritual revelation under continuationist logic is fallible. The revelation is infallible, but God does not give the recipient infallible understanding of it. This could pose many problems, so opponents against it simply opt for the biblical revelations, which were perfectly interpreted. Do you think the fallibility aspect is too detrimental to rely on it in any way? If it's fallible, why bother?

[1]

You probably did not intend it to be so, but this is a trick. You made up a problem that should never have existed, and then you throw it over to me and expect me to unravel it. It is a loaded question, and I am not falling for it. A number of creeds include cessationism as an article of faith, making not-cessationism a heresy. For example, the Westminster Confession makes cessationism a function of the completion of the Bible. However, as I have shown in my writings on the subject, the fact that believers in Christ can wield miraculous powers by faith is a function of the existence of God and the gospel of Christ. But creeds do not make the continuation of the existence of God into its own doctrine. They would say that God lives forever to indicate his eternal nature, but not to address some controversy about the cessation of God.

This whole category of the cessationist controversy is fraudulent. I refuse to engage the issue in fraudulent terms that are imposed on me. Thus I would not make "continuationism" as such into an article of faith, because there should be no such artificial doctrine. If God promised something, such as salvation on the basis of the atonement, then the burden of proof is on those who claim that this benefit of the atonement has ceased. It would be ridiculous to put the burden of proof on me to demonstrate that the effects of the atonement continue. Of course I can do it, but I would be the fool if I play along without protest. I will not silently allow people to make me work for one thing after another when this is an evasive tactic to avoid answering for their own position. I will not be tricked by the loaded categories. It is disappointing that people have gotten away with this for so long.

If we allude to the controversy in our creeds, we must declare cessationism as anti-Christian heresy. We must remain true to Scripture and insist that Christians can wield miraculous powers by faith according to the basic gospel promises and commands, but I would not say that these "continue," just like I would not say the gospel continues. It just is. So ask me instead: Should the gospel be an article of faith? Yes. Also, I would not call these miraculous powers the gifts of the Spirit, because the Bible almost never refers to them like this. Rather, the Bible portrays the miraculous powers as native abilities of those who have faith in Jesus Christ and who have received the Holy Spirit. The gifts refer to only one of several ways miracles can happen through people. Along with the deceitful categories of cessation and continuation, overuse of the "gifts" language has also distorted the discussion through the centuries.

There are many texts in the Bible that explicitly promise miracles would happen to Christians and by Christians. It is not a matter of whether this ceases or continues, but this is simply what it means to be Christians. It is the gospel. The burden of proof is on the cessationists to show that God has died, that God has lied, or that God has somehow legitimately altered the gospel after he has permanently finalized the gospel.

If we insist on asking, the Bible indeed guarantees that Christians will continue to receive and perform miracles. Some of the strongest texts are in fact used by cessationists, because they are idiots, and their opponents are also idiots when they fail to notice the abuse. For example, see "The Worst Text for Cessationism." It shows that 1 Corinthians 13 refutes cessationism, and out of this text I deduced seven rebukes against those who affirm this satanic doctrine.

Then, consider Peter's first sermon after the resurrection of Christ — the apostolic platform for the entire gospel ministry. People miss the fact that he talks about salvation only as a way to obtain the Spirit. The sermon begins when people asked about speaking in tongues, and is intended to answer their question. He concludes by asserting that the Spirit is a gift for all future generations (Acts 2:39), and the only reception or baptism of the Spirit that Peter knows is the one that he describes in the same sermon from the prophecy of Joel. It is one that comes with visions, dreams, prophecies, and all kinds of signs and wonders.

Among the many places that I address this, see "The Miracle Majority" and "The Promise of the Spirit." Both Joel and Peter so closely associate calling on the name of the Lord for grace and receiving the Spirit of the Lord for power that the two stand or fall together. This is the grace to obtain salvation, and after that, the power to perform miracles. If one continues, the other continues. And if you reject one, you disown the other. On the basis of the sermon, if you fail to affirm that you should experience miracles by the Spirit, you have no warrant to affirm that you should experience salvation by Jesus Christ. They remain two distinguishable blessings (Acts 8:15-16), but they constitute one irreducible gospel (Acts 2:17, 21; 2:38a, 38b).

So this is another text. It shows not only that the miraculous continues — or just is — but also that it is the gospel. Even the most skilled theological surgeon (most theologians are

not preachers, but surgeons) cannot excise only this part of the gospel and leave the rest intact, because it is not really a part of the gospel, but it is the gospel. It is the soul of the gospel, as much as the atonement is the gospel. To remove this part, which is not really a part, amounts to a wholesale rejection of the gospel, and renunciation of Jesus Christ. The cessationist points his filthy finger in the face of God and screams "LIAR!"

There are so many more. When we talk about miracles, remember that the powers available to Christians are not all about revelations, but also healing, and as Jesus promised multiple times, even miracles of nature, if we will have faith (Mark 11:23). A text like James 5:15, which promises healing by faith, has no place for a discussion on whether it continues or not. It just promises that if you pray in faith, the Lord will heal. If something "ceases," it must be either the Lord has died, or someone's faith has died. I think it is the faith, but the cessationist maintains that he has faith, so the only alternative is that he thinks God has died, and that he has faith in his own invention. He believes in a cessationist deity that the Bible never talks about and that is unknown to the religion of Christ.

[2]

Cessationists are in fact against visions and prophecies today, but I know the kind you are thinking of. They slither around as serpents of heresy and deception. They shift as they are challenged by biblical evidence and logical argument. Their doctrine requires them to be against these things, but some claim that they are not against them and still call themselves cessationists. Some cessationists morph into charismatics even while you are talking to them, and still insist on calling themselves cessationists. Sometimes they are left with only the label, when they seem to have become only charismatics with very pathetic faith. Instead of cessationists and continuationists, two better categories would be smartists and stupidists. If you claim one thing and believe another, or if you just want the label regardless of what you believe, you are a stupidist. You are a straight-out moron. Anyway, when you say they allow these things, you are either being unfair to them, or to me, or to both. But I will go along with this.

I would like to grill you on this "continuationist logic" you speak of. What the John MacArthur is it? Pardon the vulgar language. If you are referring to a certain charismatic perspective on prophecy, not everyone subscribes to it, and it might not apply to me. It would be foolish of you to slip this into the question and expect me to take responsibility for it. If you agree with what I said about "cessationist logic," which unlike you, I did explain, would you be asking me all of this? I have clearly stated the cessationist doctrine (which is anti-Christ), and its logical result (which is more anti-Christ). If you disagree, then where is your refutation? Why ask me about the "continuationist logic," when you have said nothing about the "cessationist logic," as if the burden is still on me? But I will go along with this as well.

Now suppose atheists believe in the God of the Bible, in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the Bible as his infallible word, even more than I do, then they can call themselves anything they want. They can call themselves Magic Glitter Rangers. They can call

themselves Donut Heroes. I don't care. Perhaps they believe in God, but their only problem is with "Christian" hypocrites like the cessationists, or that they cannot tell who the real Christians are? Tell me, is this how you define atheism? Are atheists just Christians who are concerned about human fallibility? Or are they atheists because they really disbelieve in God? If you are going to ask this question about fallibility, explain what you think about these strange atheists. Are you on their side or not? Why? If you do not define atheism this way, then you are obviously making an excuse for the cessationists. It is absurd and dishonest.

If cessationists claim that they have no problem with visions and dreams, but they are cessationists because they are concerned about false interpretations, then they have completely destroyed their own interpretations of the Bible, unless they maintain that their interpretations of the Bible are infallible, in which case I would have a different kind of fun with them, or watch them murder one another over their hundreds of different interpretations. If they use this excuse of fallible interpretation, they destroy all of their doctrines, including the existence of God, the atonement of Christ — and of course, the doctrine of cessationism. If it's fallible, why bother, right? So let's not bother with cessationism. Let's leave their churches and seminaries. Let's take away their positions and salaries. Let's drive them out of our lives! Also, if their interpretations of the Bible are fallible, then perhaps their interpretations of the charismatics or continuationists are also fallible. They have taken themselves totally out of the debate.

The Bible tells us to judge prophecies and appearances, but the doctrine of cessationism wipes them out as a matter of principle. The doctrine of cessationism in fact prevents people from obeying the Bible, which commands us to judge these things by the word of God. It is an advanced form of defiance. It teaches rebellion before the fact. When cessationists turn their doctrine into something else, they wish to portray the effort as defense against straw man attacks. The truth is that they are losing, and the defense is an act of retreat. This is the same stupid move that some atheists use when they claim that they do not really assert that there is no God, but that they do not know, or cannot know, or that their view is more like unbelief or non-belief. I have addressed this in "Atheism as Non-Belief." This is when you point your finger straight at them and scream "LOSER!" I can say more about this, but I am laughing so hard that my hands are shaking.

You say that the cessationists "opt for biblical revelations." This is a lie. What do the "biblical revelations" say? They tell us to receive visions, dreams, prophecies, tongues, healings, miracles, and all kinds of signs and wonders. So we are back to having revelations and miracles all over the place. You can "opt for" being a billionaire, but how much money do you really have? If you have ten dollars, you are not a billionaire. It is not as if you call yourself that because you have faith for it, because that would be the prosperity gospel, right? Cessationists are against God's promises in that area as well.

If the cessationists "opt for biblical revelations," then they would believe, and teach, and produce what these revelations say. They would receive visions and dreams, they would prophesy, and they would heal the sick and cast out demons, and work all kinds of miracles. They would talk about these things as a matter of routine, with miraculous demonstrations

before the people. They would attack the "real" cessationists, or whatever we should call them. But no, the truth is that they "opt for" their own doctrines, their own traditions and theories, turning people against the gospel of Jesus Christ, while pretending to be its faithful teachers and defenders. They are the most sinister religious charlatans and hypocrites. They can "opt for" calling themselves Christians, but if they are cessationists, then...well, let's just say that they should be careful.

If the so-called cessationists declare they believe that visions, dreams, prophecies, tongues, healings, and other miracles have never ceased, that they continue to happen to Christians and by Christians as a matter of guarantee, secured by covenant right, according to gospel promise, on exercise of faith, and then demonstrate these signs and wonders preferably so often that miracles are taken for granted, and if they will condemn cessationism as a counterfeit gospel and a non-Christian religion, then our disagreement ends, and they can call themselves whatever they want. They shall be my Donut Heroes.

However, no version of cessationism comes close to this minimum biblical standard. No version amounts to even the core, center, foundation, or beginning of the gospel. Every variation condemns the true gospel. Every variation preaches a false gospel. Cessationists complain about straw man attacks when they are losing the debate. The truth is that they keep using straw man defenses. They falsely allege misrepresentation as a way to avoid answering for their heretical doctrine. Thus they also bear false witness against their opponents. I see through them every time, and I will not let them escape. No one should let them escape.

In fact, I have repeatedly shown that cessationists are the ones who misrepresent those they criticize. This is not a straw man defense — I do not need to whine about a straw man to defend my view — because over and over again, I have demonstrated that I could often accept the misrepresentations for the purpose of discussion and still win. Just as those who murdered Jesus could not support their accusations even with false witnesses, cessationists cannot advance their arguments even with lies about the followers of Jesus.

When cessationists say that they believe, they lie, and they lie because they cannot defend their actual doctrine. But they still cannot defend what is left of their doctrine even after multiple modifications. Any retreat on their part is not enough for me until they obediently surrender to the minimum standard I just stated. I refuse to compromise with them. I am right about this, and I will always win. All Christians have the duty to pursue them, and exterminate every trace of their counterfeit gospel of unbelief and tradition.

If they wish to nullify everything by appealing to an issue of fallibility, then I have answered this above. They are defeated even before we discuss how to address human error when it comes to spiritual operations. They have not only removed themselves from this debate, but from all debates on all topics, and they have cut themselves off from Christ. It would not be an act of refutation, but an act of self-damnation. Some people would rather burn in hell than to believe in God.

From: email

10. Cessationism: The Reverse Gospel

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. (1 Corinthians 4:6)

So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. (2 Corinthians 4:12)

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

The Bible explicitly states that the suffering of the apostles was exceptional, but explicitly states that the power of the apostles was universal. Although we may also suffer for the gospel, the apostles endured a degree of suffering that was exceptional. On the other hand, the apostles enjoyed a degree of power that was universal. In fact, some Christians who were not apostles enjoyed at least equal if not greater miraculous powers and experiences than the apostles. Philip and Stephen were two examples (Acts 8:39, 7:55-56).

Cessationism teaches the opposite. It declares that the suffering of the apostles was universal, but the power of the apostles was exceptional. Cessationism is an anti-apostolic cult, an anti-biblical heresy, an anti-Christ blasphemy, an alternative gospel, a contra-orthodoxy, a demon religion, and a reverse Christianity. Cessationism is the cessation of faith in God. Although it is the opposite of the Christian faith, this doctrine is a widespread assumption among those who call themselves Christians. This makes it that much more satanic and dangerous.

You think suffering is universal. So when the supermarket overcharges you for a bag of potato chips, you twist the Scripture and exclaim, "Woe is me, I am suffering like Job. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away." You think healing is exceptional. So when someone who has a sickness comes to you, you twist the Scripture and admonish, "All things work together for the good of those who love God." You are a disgrace. You are a failure. The Bible that you claim to know declares that Jesus took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. The Bible that you claim to believe commands you to lay hands on the sick, so that they may recover. The Bible that you claim to defend orders you to pray with faith, so that the Lord will raise them up.

Why do you call him Lord, but refuse to do what he says? All your pretentious theories about theology, apologetics, ministry, ethics, and such things are all useless. You are burning away your worthless life. All your high-minded discussions about the biblical view of politics, sports, science, culture, blah...blah...blah, are all rubbish. You are a religious

phony. You are the enemy that you claim to fight. You are the charlatan who deceives. You are the heretic who leads people astray. You tell me you love Christ? Liar! You do not even like him a little. You shed a few tears when you sing a hymn. So what? You are not moved by Christ. You are moved by your own piety. You are so impressed with yourself that you cry. Who do you think you are fooling? You will not follow even the most comfortable commands of Christ. You will not believe even the most pleasant promises of God. You criticize the people who show the slightest interest in them.

The thing that an apostle himself said was exceptionally concentrated on apostles, you want to impose on everyone. The thing that the same apostle said was universally demonstrated by believers, you want to reserve for apostles. Repent of this doctrine of demons, and renounce the religion of cessationism. You must do more than this. If you do not condemn cessationism, then you condemn Jesus Christ. You must attack cessationism in public, with indignation and hostility. He said, "He who does not gather with me scatters." If you remain silent, you are guilty. If you do not condemn, then you are condemned. Will you do it? Will you condemn the false doctrine? I think you will not, because your allegiance to Christ is just lip service. You are already making up excuses.

11. Journey to Faith

This is great news, that you are open to leaving cessationism. People are waking up to the fact that they have been deceived by false doctrine and tradition, and robbed of divine blessings and powers that were bought for us by the precious blood of Jesus. I have several suggestions that might help you to facilitate your journey to faith.

Do not rush the change. Indeed, I think that this is an urgent issue. It is important for you to take this direction right away. I wish you could change entirely today. However, I would rather you take one step at a time, rather than carelessly committing to something, and then swing back and forth, back and forth, between one opinion and another. It is urgent, and most important, but since you declare that you are open to change on the matter, this is a good start.

Do not look to people. Do not look at what people call "charismatics," and think that if you leave cessationism, then you must become these charismatics. No, you don't need to be like anybody. You just need to follow God's word. If you look at the charismatics in your investigation, you might become disgusted, and it might affect how you view the doctrine. First, you might be disgusted because you have been taught to despise charismatics. Second, the charismatics are indeed wrong on some things, and because you have been told to despise them, your reaction might be exaggerated, and you might end up being unfair to what the Bible itself says on the subject. The charismatics do not represent the Bible, and they do not represent me. Consider what I say on my own terms, but especially be fair to what the Bible says. I sometimes employ terms that the most hated charismatics use, in order to place a stumbling block before those who harden their hearts, so that seeing, they will not perceive, and hearing, they will not understand. This is indeed what happens. On the other hand, those who are open to truth pay attention to the context and meaning, and they are able to grasp what I say, and see that they come from the word of God.

Do not argue with people. If you are going to look at the doctrine of God's miracles and blessings, you should give it a fair chance. You have already heard from cessationists. You know what they say. You can argue with them later. They love to argue more than they love Jesus Christ, so they will wait for you. Much debate at this point will likely produce frustration, especially because most cessationists represent their side incoherently, and represent the charismatics dishonestly. Do not challenge cessationists at this time. Do not think it is always better to discuss something back and forth, back and forth, with no end in sight. It is not better. You should be spending a lot of time thinking on this other side first. No one is forcing you to accept anything. Take your time to become informed.

Do not swing back and forth. If you are taking a step toward this direction of faith in God's power, then let each step be permanent. If you are not confident, then take a little more time, but once you take a step, do not slip back. However, do not let this be an excuse to delay too long. Let me remind you, if cessationism is wrong, you are in a state of rebellion against the word of God. It is not a safe place to be, but it is not good to swing back and forth either.

Do not see it as a burden. You are indeed responsible to believe and practice the truth. If cessationism is wrong, and I am certain it is, then you are in some trouble, since you stand in defiance against God's word as long as you affirm cessationism. But God's doctrine of faith and power is not meant to be a threat or a burden. This is supposed to be good news. God is for you. God gives you power. God makes you his co-worker, and empowers you by his Spirit. God wants to be good to you, and you can receive good things from him by faith. This is what you are supposed to think about it. I always deliver it as gospel to those who believe – as good news. It is to those who harden their hearts in unbelief and tradition that I make the doctrine into a staff of judgment. It exposes their rebellion, and God will hold them accountable.

Do not base much on experience. Most of those around you probably do not believe. They are probably cessationists. Even if you believe, you might not have much faith at this time, but God's power at work is based on faith. So at first you might not receive many experiences or demonstrations. You must first find out what God's word teaches and base your doctrine on that alone. I have had some experiences, but I still base all of my faith on the word of God. I can delight in experiences that are in accordance to the word of God. I certainly give thanks when I receive from God by faith, or when someone benefits from his power, but the word of God is what keeps this going, and what keeps us on the right path.

Do not emphasize the "gift" language. Do not limit yourself to certain popular passages on the subject. The Bible almost never uses the "gift" language to refer to this topic. It is fine sometimes to use it for the sake of convenience, but always keep in mind that the Bible does not really use it. The Bible refers to miracles in terms of God doing something, the Spirit coming upon us, praying and receiving, having faith in God, and so on. The focus on "gifts" skews the entire discussion. Does God continue? Does prayer continue? Does faith continue? Or have these ceased? Does the Spirit still come upon people, or did he die with the apostles? Ask yourself these questions.

I do not enjoy offering so many "do not" suggestions, but I came up with these to address what you told me about your traditional background. Let us consider a positive suggestion. Imagine yourself on the other side of the issue. You might not be ready to commit to faith in God's power, but you can safely imagine, if only for a moment or two each time. Imagine that cessationism is false, then what would this or that biblical verse mean? It might feel strange that the Bible now means what it says, but try to get used to it.

What if it had always been possible for God's people to experience and minister miracles by faith? What would explain some people's powerlessness in history? Cessationists interpret history as if cessationists are correct, but what if they are not? Then there is another way of looking at history. Ah, then they would be sinners and failures. The cessationists assume their doctrine, and interpret history by it, and then they assume this version of history, and interpret our doctrine by it. There is another way to tell the story. We reverse the process. We derive our doctrine from God's word, and interpret history by it, and then we assume this version of history, and interpret their doctrine by it. When we

do this, we expose the devastation cessationism has caused, to the church, to the world, and to humanity throughout history. This is the frightening truth that they wish to hide from you and from themselves, and if possible, from God himself.

Imagine. If faith and power have never ceased, then what is God saying to me now? What does he want from me now? How now shall I live? You will see that some biblical texts will immediately make more sense. You will no longer have to distort them or explain them away. You have heard the arguments of cessationism. Now imagine yourself on the other side, and imagine yourself attacking cessationism. What would you say? What biblical argument would you use? How would your opponents answer? Are their answers honest, or just another round of trickery and diversion?

From: email

12. Killed by "Christianity"

Your friend said that he would be healed if it was "God's will," regardless of God's explicitly revealed will in the Bible. The truth is that people who say that they would be healed if it is "God's will" do not believe that it is God's will to heal them. Of course, if they recover after medical treatment, they would say that it happens because of God's will. This is not our topic. I mean they never believe that they would receive healing in the way the Bible describes, that is, by God's miraculous power. When medical science cannot help them, they would die, and then God would get the blame for it, even though God himself tells them not to think as they do. There is no faith in declaring that they would be healed if it is God's will. It is just religious talk. Faith would accept God's word, embrace that as God's will, and receive what it promises.

This is not to condemn your friend. He was taught false doctrine, too much of it for too long. Perhaps he would have believed if taught properly. Perhaps he would have listened eventually. Perhaps the word of God would have broken through. But it was too late. When he disregarded the Bible and said that it was up to God's will, it meant he already decided that it was not God's will to heal him, but that it was up to medical science. Of course, medical science failed, as it does so often. Again, this is not to condemn your friend. He was a victim, but he was also responsible, and he paid for it with his life. Still, I am directing attention to this only so that you would not blame God, or to relegate the thing to "God's will" in a way that is the same as to blame him for it. And I am directing attention to this so you would not think that God's promises are not as stated or as we understand them. They are exactly what they appear to be, but your friend did not believe them. He surrendered to some nebulous "will of God," and abandoned the definite word of God.

You often cannot force someone to receive healing if he thinks he knows God but for some reason refuses to believe what God says. You can successfully minister healing to unbelievers who do not know better, but the more someone knows, the more God usually holds him accountable. As Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). There are indeed cases where you can "force" it, or make it happen by your faith, but this is not the place to become tangled up in the details. We often discuss this matter in connection with the doctrine of healing, as to when your faith can work for others.

The right course for you is to invest in healing even more. Throw yourself into it. Do not let Satan rob you of something that is plainly stated in Scripture. You have many other friends and relatives. Will they be ready when it is their turn to need healing? Will they declare that they will be healed only if it is God's will, regardless of what the Bible promises? What is to blame in this case? We must blame cessationism. We must blame a false application of divine sovereignty. These things killed your friend. Hate them with a passion. Besides your friends and relatives, there are many Christians who have been scammed, and many non-Christians who could be healed and then led to Christ. You can

help them if you would grasp this promise and ministry of healing. Resolve to bring God's healing and salvation to the world. This is the way to honor your friend.

I am not lecturing you, and I am not being insensitive, but I have faced this myself. I was still in high school when I met the first one. He was fifteen, just slightly younger than I was. He had leukemia and was about to die. He was a Christian. His friends and relatives were Christians. They were supposed to believe in the word of God, but I brought the word of God to him and I could not talk him out of dying. He said it was "God's will," you see. I knew he could be healed. Many had been healed right under my hands as I prayed for them. But this boy already decided to die. Those Christians brought me in several days before he died, and gave me ten minutes to talk to him. Do your thing! Work your magic!

Perhaps I could have done more if they had allowed me more time, but when I went in, he did not have faith. He was just religious. Think about it. At fifteen, he had learned enough tradition to insist that he would be healed only if it was "God's will," regardless of what I showed him from the Bible. He never refuted any text that I used, but only nodded, and went right back to the "God's will" routine. Cessationism killed him. Divine sovereignty - - I mean that demonic but commonly accepted perversion of the doctrine -- killed him. He could have been healed if he was an unbeliever, because then it would have depended on my faith and ministry, or he could have believed when I introduced the gospel to him. Ironically, "Christianity" killed him. And the Christians around him made it happen.

From: email

13. The Healing-Driven Life

When you have a sickness or injury, you are probably reminded of other people's suffering. Many of them suffer more than you, and longer than you. Many people suffer constantly, every day without respite. We must have compassion on those who are wrecked by physical disease just like we have compassion on those who are bound by spiritual depravity and psychological depression.

Jesus Christ is the solution. There is grace and power in the gospel. Just as it can save those who believe (Romans 1:16), it can heal those who believe (Psalm 103:3, Acts 14:9, Galatians 3:5). God is for all of life. The gospel is powerful to penetrate every aspect of man's existence (Psalm 107:20, Proverbs 4:22).

Even though medical science has supposedly advanced, there are still so many sick people in the world. Some cannot afford care, and some cannot be cured. Moreover, we sometimes hear about new super-diseases that perplex the experts. Will they eventually overcome them? But what can they do for someone now? And by then, there will be other new super-diseases. In any case, even if it is something that men can cure, we should never make the gospel the last resort. Faith is our first response.

Jesus devoted a curiously exaggerated amount of time to healing the sick. He did not think it was unspiritual. He did not think it was an imbalance. He did this even though the people he healed eventually died, and we have inherited only written records of these miracles. He did this even though he could have performed more miracles of nature, or preached more sermons, or trained more disciples. For Jesus, healing demonstrated the heart of God, as with forgiveness and righteousness.

He preached, and then he healed the sick, healed the sick, and healed the sick. And then he healed the sick, healed the sick, and healed the sick. It was how he characterized his ministry (Matthew 11:5), and it was how the apostles characterized his ministry (Acts 10:38). Jesus healed the sick like one possessed – possessed by the will of God. He said, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). In other words, "I have to keep going. I have to keep working. Come on, we are running out of time." What prompted him to say this? What was driving him like this? It was when he came across a blind man, and healed him (John 9:1-7).

In the same context, he said, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). But he also said to his people, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). And he said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). Christians are to continue his work. We must not hide our light. We must also live the healing-driven life.

14. Cessationism: The Demon Fortress

People are so happy when they leave cessationism behind. At times there remains some resentment as they slam the door on the heresy, having wasted so much time to it, and having suffered so much because of it. Some of them could only watch as they lost sick friends to cessationism, because they never knew that they could receive healing from God by faith. Any glimmer of hope they saw from the Bible was decimated by the intimidating ramblings of their seminary-manufactured pastors. Their friends died, and they never even tried to grasp what was before them in the word of God. It was within reach. It was right in front of them! Cessationists killed them.

They sometimes tell me they had the sense that something was wrong with the doctrines they received. The things they learned from Christian leaders did not match what the Bible said. On the other hand, the so-called charismatics appeared unable to explain themselves, and they even appeared repulsive, especially when seen through the constant criticisms of the cessationists. There are competent charismatic scholars, but these people did not know them. There was nowhere for them to turn. Their hearts were restless because they sensed that the truth was different from what they were told, but at the same time what they were told kept them contained. They felt trapped. They became prisoners in their own minds. They became unable to grasp or accept the word of God. The Bible calls this a demonic stronghold.

God's word is not bound. It penetrates the soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It invades men's inner dungeons and sets them ablaze with fire. As I declared the truth from the Bible -- the same Bible they had all along -- and harshly condemned cessationism, it was as if the prison doors were blown aside. Some of them would express tremendous gratitude. What joy and liberation! Happy is the one who has been set free to have faith in God. They needed someone to give them "permission" to leave false tradition and to follow after Christ. I was not the one who delivered them, but with biblical doctrines and arguments, and with candid rhetorics, I offered a choice that was denied to them. Then the matter was between them and God. When God worked in their hearts, they threw off their chains and embraced the truth.

Of course, when confronted with the truth, some people harden their hearts even more. When the word of God comes, you can never remain the same. You will either accept it and get better, or you will reject it and become worse. Jesus said, "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him" (Matthew 13:12). The people think they know a lot, but if they reject the word of God that comes from us, even what they have will become ineffectual in their lives. They will lose their light, and their knowledge will turn against them.

Unbelief carries its own punishment. God can arrange a feast in front of them, and they cannot recognize what is before them. It is a degrading existence. I present the matter in a way that those who have "eyes that see and ears that hear" (Matthew 13:16) will embrace the truth, and those who do not will commit even more to the lie. This is precisely what

happens. As Isaiah said, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them" (Matthew 13:13-15). They point their fingers at me, but they are offended by the word of God, and Satan steals it from their hearts. Each time he does this to one of them, he also tears out a piece of his soul. The man begins to die from within, and he eventually becomes a walking corpse, a religious zombie.

You can show the Bible to them, and read it to them like they are children, but nothing registers, and they keep rehearsing the same excuses in protest. When you speak to them, they are like those who have been brainwashed by the cults. Something has hijacked their minds. They cannot reason with you intelligently. The exchange makes no sense. They never win, but they persist. They often refuse to interact with your points, but they still think they are justified. The next time you see them, it starts all over again as if the previous conversation never happened. It is bizarre. What is this? Their hearts have hardened. Their minds are fortified by a demonic stronghold that filters out the truth. God can deliver them, but until then, they are stuck in a rancid pile of cessationism.

The topic indeed demands strong language. It concerns the heart of the gospel. It concerns the place of Christ the Mediator, his position at the right hand of God. Cessationism is as serious and sinister as any heresy. It must not be discussed with academic detachment, but with bloodcurdling earnest. It is serious in principle, but also serious in consequence. Is this a God of secret providence, or also a God of evident demonstration? Is he a God who hides, or a God who shows? The answer makes a difference to all the church and all of humanity. Still, I coerce no one. I have no power to compel other people's hearts. I cannot harm them or punish them. They can believe what they want, and God will hold them accountable. To those who have faith, the topic itself is not a harsh one. There is no struggle or judgment. It is the gospel. It is good news from God, the power to save and help all those who believe.

15. The Gospel Guarantee of Self-Knowledge

There is a school of philosophy that takes God's word as the first principle and then deduces its system. It rejects false methods of discovery such as intuition, sensation, and irrational processes and starting points. This approach is correct. In fact, it is the only correct approach. However, the followers of this philosophy often fail to truly hold God's word as the first principle and deduce their conclusions from it. Their first principle is often their own philosophical theories about God's word, rather than God's word itself.

For this reason, most of them are cessationists. They would claim that knowledge comes only from God's word, so that prophecies and revelations are ruled out, even though God's word promises and commands us to receive prophecies and revelations. If God's word is their starting point, their foundation, their ultimate authority, then they would heal the sick and cast out demons. But they do not. This is evidence that their first principle is not God's word, but like their opponents, their first principle consists of their own assumptions about the world.

Another example is their denial of self-knowledge, that one can know himself. Since knowledge comes from deduction from Scripture, since the deduction cannot accept premises from outside of Scripture, and since it seems one cannot find explicit information about himself in Scripture, it follows that one cannot deduce knowledge about himself from Scripture, and therefore one cannot know himself. It is often applied even to the assurance of salvation. This is not a nuanced explanation, and members of this camp might express themselves differently, but the point is that they are skeptical of the possibility of self-knowledge.

The followers of this philosophy almost always refer to Jeremiah 17:9. It says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (KJV). This application of the verse is a devastating error. The first rule of biblical interpretation is to observe the context. God had decreed a foreign invasion against his people because of their wickedness. Instead of returning to God in repentance and obedience, they relied on their idols, their armies and weapons, and their alliances. So God said by Jeremiah, "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD" (17:5).

It is in such a context that verse 9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" The verse is more about knowing others than knowing yourself. If you trust in other people, you will be disappointed, because the human heart is deceitful and wicked. But if you trust in the Lord, you will be established (v. 7-8). Perhaps it is still possible to challenge self-knowledge with it, but this is not the intention of the verse. To overlook the proper meaning of the verse in order to use the verse to maintain a philosophy that claims to regard biblical revelation as the first principle is both ironic and hypocritical.

The usual first rule of biblical interpretation is to observe the context, but it is not my first rule. Christians often neglect to inspect the verses that they are using to prove their points, so that they are refuted even before the context is taken into account. Thus my first rule of hermeneutics is, "READ THE WORDS." Just read the thing before you throw it at people. What does verse 9 say? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" This cannot be a description of a Christian. This cannot be a reborn spirit. The believer has been regenerated in the image of Christ. He is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The love of God has been poured out in his heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). He has been transformed and enhanced at the deepest level. Is he "deceitful above all things"? Is he "desperately wicked"? No. If he is, then he is still a non-Christian.

To apply a verse like this to everyone, including the Christian, even relative to his assurance of salvation, betrays a reprobate mindset. Except for the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and except for some among the charismatic groups that are often criticized for teaching a gospel of faith, or self-improvement, or of health and wealth, this reprobate mindset is almost universal in church history and theology. It is a worldview that portrays Christ as having made almost no difference in the Christian. It is a religion that represents the Christian as still a sinner, beggar, weakling, sick, poor, and almost dead. It is a false humility that makes a mockery of the work of the Holy Spirit.

God said, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). They will not be "deceitful above all things." God said, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). They will not be "desperately wicked."

The Bible says I am the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Bible says God has commanded his light to shine in my heart (2 Corinthians 4:6). The Bible says that I am the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19). The Bible says I am more than a conqueror through him who loved me and gave himself for me (Romans 8:37). The Bible says that I have overcome, because greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). The Christian religion is a worldview of righteousness and victory. I was deceitful above all things, but now I worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). I was desperately wicked, but now I have been born of God, and God's seed remains in me, and I cannot go on sinning, because I have been born of God (1 John 3:9).

If the Bible is truly your first principle, then this is what you would deduce from it. Or do you pay lip service to the "Bible" as a sound or a symbol, but regard what it says as rubbish? The reprobate mindset belongs to the unbeliever. It churns out a grotesque gospel. If you think like a reprobate, then you must be an unbeliever. If you are a Christian, then you must admit that I am correct about this. Now renew your mind (Romans 12:2).

Much of evangelical preaching gives voice to Satan the accuser. It claims to emphasize repentance, contrary to a false gospel that merely affirms the unbelievers in their sin.

However, if you preach repentance according to the gospel, you would also preach the results that follow from this repentance. This is not a repentance that leads to more condemnation, more self-abasement, and more groveling. One who truly repents and turns to Christ receives forgiveness, cleansing, righteousness, and the confidence to march straight to the throne of grace to obtain grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). The Bible says that if the blood of animals had been effective, then the worshipers would have had no more consciousness of sin (Hebrews 10:2). However, much of evangelical preaching represents the Christian message as one that demands and continues the consciousness of sin. It follows that it is a false gospel that portrays the blood of Christ as no better than the blood of animals. It has no right to complain about a lenient and affirming gospel, when it only caters to another kind of itching ears — the itching ears of religious masochism. It claims to restore the gospel, but it attempts to silence the gospel.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ: "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22). This is what I have. I have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place. I draw near to God with a sincere heart. I have full assurance of faith. I have been cleansed from a guilty conscience. I am a son of God (John 1:12). I am a co-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17). I am a royal priest of the Most High (Revelation 1:6). I am not deceitful above all things. I am not desperately wicked. The Prodigal Son received the father's embrace and welcome. He received the best robe, a ring, and sandals on his feet (Luke 15:20, 22). This is but a faint hint of what I have received through Jesus Christ. The Father embraced and welcomed me. The Father washed and clothed me. I have received God's abundant provision of grace and gift of righteousness. Now I reign in life by that one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

This is the basic gospel. How come evangelicals do not speak like this more, or ever? How come those self-righteous theologians and nitpicking philosophers do not teach like this? The Bible speaks like this. If the Bible is our first principle, then we would think like this, preach like this, talk like this, all the time. But even when Christians are forced to deal with these things when they come across them in Scripture, they go right back to talking like reprobates a minute later. Then they blast people for preaching a gospel that acknowledges the promises of God and the effects of the gospel. Why? A reprobate mindset. A reprobate gospel. A reprobate theology. Desperately wicked, indeed.

To make deductions about yourself, you will need premises about yourself. The Bible also covers this. Paul wrote, "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). We derive two points from this. First, this means that a man can know his own thoughts. Thus he can supply premises into biblical deductions about himself. At this point, it is sufficient to note that this is possible. How one evaluates his own thoughts is a separate issue. Second, a man knows only his own thoughts, and not other people's thoughts. The followers of this philosophy that denies self-knowledge

tripped up themselves because they failed to make this simple distinction between private and public knowledge.

They are usually debating believers about theories in philosophy and methods in apologetics, and occasionally debating unbelievers about the Christian faith, which is what these theories and methods should be used for in the first place. Almost all of this entails arguments about the correct public worldview, regardless of what a person knows or thinks in his own mind. We have a public first principle, and to others we make public deductions with public conclusions. But when we make deductions about ourselves on the basis of this same first principle, we supply premises that are private, that we cannot show to the public or prove to the public, even if we know that they are true. But this is irrelevant in most debates, since most debates concern public issues.

That is, in a debate about atheism, I would care about whether you can prove to me that atheism is correct, but I would not care if you can prove to me that you are an atheist. Do you know that you are an atheist? Maybe, maybe not, but that is not the crux of the debate. The same is true in Christian ministry. I can publicly argue for the Christian faith and preach the gospel. I can publicly defeat anyone who opposes the faith. On the other hand, there is no need to prove that I am a Christian to the public in the same way that I declare that the Christian faith is true to the public. When I preach the gospel, I am not preaching that I am a Christian, but I am preaching that you should be a Christian. Of course, I can still make some arguments to show that I am a Christian using public premises stated in Scripture, but other people will not know me as I know myself.

The Bible says that I know my own thoughts, and this would be especially true because I am a Christian. What I know about myself is not public, and therefore it is not used as a basis to prove something in a public debate. A private premise is not shared or examined, but I can use it as a premise in my own reasoning, in making deductions about myself. If someone denies self-knowledge to himself, he cannot deny it to me, since the Bible says I have it. If one declares God's word as his first principle but cannot accommodate what this first principle declares, then he is a liar. He has some other first principle, and this first principle cannot accommodate God's word. He has allowed his personal agenda to supplant the gospel agenda. He purports to defend the gospel, but his very defense is an attack on the gospel, a rejection of the gospel. His pet agenda twists his mind, so that he almost gloats that he cannot obtain self-knowledge. This is insanity. It is bad philosophy, and worse theology.

The most important kind of self-knowledge is guaranteed in Christ. You can know yourself, and know yourself as a child of God. The Bible says, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:15-16).

Our usual epistemological challenges against man's attempts to derive knowledge do not apply. The text addresses the issue from the standpoint of metaphysics, not epistemology, and it says this is something that God does. It is not something that man discovers, but

something that God performs. It is not only something that God communicates, but something that God causes, and something that God causes you to do, and something that God causes you to BE. The text says nothing about any attempt or method by man to discover that he is a child of God. There is no issue with epistemology. You get a Spirit of sonship. You call him "Father" by the Spirit. It does not say you learn it. It says you do it. Then it says that the Spirit does something — he testifies with your spirit that you are a child of God. He testifies. It does not say that you request to know. It does not say you attempt to find out. It does not even say that you listen or receive. It says he testifies. He does it.

God addresses this on the level of metaphysics, and bulldozes over every problem in epistemology. There is no categorical error, as if we pose an issue in one category and receive an answer from another category. Every theory of epistemology must have a theory of metaphysics to go along with it in the first place, and this text satisfies both categories at the same time. It says that God does something so that we would be something, get something, or know something. There is no process or method of discovery. In another place, the Bible says, "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'" (Galatians 4:6). This is even more clear in a way. God sent his Spirit into our hearts. The Spirit calls out, "Father." I know as a matter of being, not by a process of learning. I know that I am a child of God by an act of God's metaphysical power. It bypasses every problem in epistemology, because there is no room for it. This self-knowledge, this assurance of salvation, is not only guaranteed, but it is unavoidable.

If you have believed in Jesus Christ, then this knowledge belongs to you. If you do not have this assurance, then by all means work out the problem with the word of God. The worst thing that you can do is to deny that it is possible, or to adjust the gospel doctrine to accommodate your philosophy. Shake off the reprobate mindset that enslaves almost all Christians. Look! If we have confidence before God, then we will perform exploits in his name. "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us" (1 John 3:21-24). What does it say? "And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us."

16. The Westminster Kill Switch

When the Israelites were bitten by venomous snakes, God instructed Moses to make a snake and put it on a pole, and when those who were bitten by snakes looked at it, they were healed (Numbers 21:4-9). The object had no power to heal the people, but it was symbolic of the coming atonement of Christ, who would become a curse on the cross so that he could save his people.

However, the Israelites made it into an idol and burned incense to it until the time of Hezekiah. It was a mere symbol, and the king was commended for destroying it (2 Kings 18:1-4). If a symbol becomes more than a symbol in people's minds and begins to share a place with God or takes the place of his word, then it would be better to destroy the symbol so that the people could look to the reality again.

If we should destroy something that God himself commanded by supernatural revelation in order to preserve biblical worship, how much more should we destroy something that God never commanded, or at best something that he arranged by ordinary providence, in order to preserve biblical doctrine?

The Westminster Confession of Faith contains a statement that practically functions as a kill switch on the creed: "All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both" (WCF 31.3). We are focusing on the WCF because people throw it at us so much, as if we must bow to it like they do, but several other historic confessions contain similar language (e.g. Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, 21).

The statement refers to "all councils," so it must include the WCF itself. It applies "since the apostles' times," so that it has been the case since the beginning, without exception. It is possible for all councils to err, and it adds, "and many have erred." Many. This means that error is not merely possible, but it is probable. Again, this includes the WCF itself, and all other creeds. Therefore, the WCF continues, these councils "are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both" (see also WCF 1.10 and 20.2).

Unless they were liars, the framers never intended the WCF to be a rule, but only a help. It is a mere tool. It was never meant to be an authoritative standard. If they suggested otherwise elsewhere, then they contradicted themselves, and committed the very thing that WCF 31.3 mentions. Indeed, within the WCF we find what could be self-defeating statements even on our current topic. It is ironic that those who practically place the WCF on the same level with the Bible do not take WCF 31.3 to heart. They take everything that it says as Scripture, but they do not apply WCF 31.3 to the WCF itself. Thus they are double hypocrites. Just as they are selective about what they accept from the Bible, they are also selective about what they affirm from the WCF. They have believed whatever they wished all this time, and used the Bible and the WCF only to justify themselves.

When we have a disagreement with the WCF — such as with its cessationist heresy, passive reprobation, covenant of works, liberty and contingency of second causes, mysticism in baptism and communion, and so on — they must either admit that it is possible for the creed to be wrong, in which case the discussion would return to what the Bible says, and it is possible for some parts of the WCF to be completely overturned, or they must insist that it is impossible for the creed to err, in which case WCF 31.3 itself would be wrong, which would actually show that WCF 31.3 is right, so that the WCF and its followers destroy one another.

If the framers were sincere — if they were not frauds — then I think they would weep to see how people have taken their effort to provide a "help" and used it as a "rule" to supplant Scripture itself. Now if your religion has not progressed beyond 2 Kings, how dare you to challenge me about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? I know your own creed better than you do, and in a way, respect it more than you do.

The framers were prepared for idolaters like you. Even if the statement was not mainly intended as a kill switch, it can function as one when people make the creed a rule instead of a mere tool, since it declares that the Westminster council could be wrong. Of course, even if there were never any kill switch, the Bible grants us the authority to shut down the whole thing. Repent, and return to God. Return to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If the creed has become an idol, flip the switch. If you do not, I can always flip it for you.

17. Induction and Bible Study

Induction is always a fallacy, even in biblical study and systematic theology. The difference is that in cases where all the possibilities are available and considered, then it can be called a "complete induction" (the term could mean other things in various contexts), and a complete induction is the equivalent of deduction, because in that context, you possess "omniscience." Your conclusion is made by deduction from a singular and complete knowledge.

Suppose I have ten marbles in a bag, and I take out three of them to show you. All three are red. If you then say that most or all the marbles must be red, this is induction, or the method of empiricism and science, and it is always fallacious. However, suppose I take out all of them. You count that there are ten, and then you count that there are seven red ones. If you then say that most of the marbles are red, this is not fallacious. It is based on "omniscience," or complete knowledge, and it is the same as deduction. On this basis, you can say, "There are ten marbles. There are seven red ones. Therefore, most of the marbles are red." This is deduction. Still, this is not to say that we can sometimes achieve complete induction outside of revelation. This is only an analogy that cannot truly represent what we have in Scripture. We will come back to this.

In biblical study and systematic theology, all the data is contained in one place. God himself has revealed and secured all the propositions as a single closed unit. So if you formulate a doctrine based on the entire Bible, then the doctrine is deduced from the Bible. It is deduction. But if you take two verses from one book and make a doctrine that claims to represent the whole revelation, this would be induction, and it is a fallacy. This is how false doctrines and heresies are formed. What is said may be true as far as it goes, since what the Bible says is always true even if it says it just once, but it is fallacious to claim that it is the whole doctrine. And if you neglect the context, then the text might not even say what you claim that it says. Theology must consider the whole revelation, and when it does, it is based on deduction.

God always performs deduction, because he possesses true omniscience in every context. Some wish to appear clever but fail to grasp the simple concept of deduction, and therefore object to this characterization. Since all the information in deduction is contained in the starting point, in God, deduction is identical to his intuition or knowing, and does not entail a process of reasoning. When our theology is performed correctly, that is, based on a complete consideration of Scripture, the doctrine is based on God's omniscience (his omniscience revealed this part of his knowledge), and it is therefore always correct. In any case, because God is the one who produced this closed system from his own omniscience, it is also unique. It is the only system that allows us to make a valid complete induction. A complete induction from the Bible would be a deduction from a portion of God's mind, and therefore, truth.

The methods of science and empiricism can never achieve complete induction. There is an infinite number of possible variables that might or might not affect their knowledge and

experiments, so that they do not even know whether they are missing something. It is like not taking all the marbles out of the bag, so that showing you two or seven or three million red marbles means nothing. As mentioned, I need to come back to this. Our analogy is a limited illustration, since it assumes that you see correctly, that you count correctly, that you have an infallible memory or record, that I have shown you all the marbles, and a number of other things. In fact, you cannot assume that even I know about all the marbles or that I am in full control of them. Therefore, even the induction in our analogy is fallacious, because without omniscience, you can never know that it is a complete induction.

There are still people who claim that induction is necessary for biblical study and systematic theology as an objection against us, or against the fact that induction is fallacious. They are STUPID. Didn't we learn about complete induction in the first week of studying logic? Even then it was nothing new. We learned what some people want us to call it, but we applied the concept way before we studied logic, even when we were children. An argument like this could not have survived in our elementary school banter. Now STUPID people claiming the name of Christ want to trample their fellows, rise above all others in philosophical theories and methods, and then lead us to confront the unbelievers! Behold the vanity of delusional religionists. STUPID.

The empiricists cut themselves off from the Bible — and in principle, from salvation — when they insist on empiricism but cannot prove that empiricism is valid. Likewise, these "inductionists" cut themselves off from Christ when they insist on induction but cannot prove that induction is valid. Induction is invalid by its very structure and definition. When they insist on induction but cannot prove that induction is valid, they also confess that all their doctrines are invalid. Thus they forfeit the doctrines of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith, and all biblical doctrines. In principle, they cannot be Christians. They cannot be saved. But they want to teach us how to defend the faith! STUPID.

From: email

18. Can This "Faith" Save?

What good is it, if someone claims that he has faith in Christ but does not produce the action that Christ commands? Can this "faith" save him? If a brother or sister is sick and suffering, and you say, "Let the will of God be done" or "Endure it for the glory of God," without stretching forth your hand to heal the person by a miracle in the name of Jesus, what good is it? This faith-claim, if it has no faith-action, is dead. You will say, "Some people have faith in the doctrines of God, but some people run after the miracles of God." Show me your faith in these doctrines that promise the miracles, and I will show you my faith by the miracles that these doctrines promise. You call yourself a defender of the faith. Good! But even Pharisees defend the faith -- and then burn in hell.

Do you want to be shown, you stupid person, that claiming to have faith in the gospel but rejecting the actual promise of the gospel is useless? Was not Abraham justified when he believed in a gospel of healing and prosperity [1]? He had faith in God's promise to heal him and his wife, to reverse old age and barrenness [2], and to make him the father of nations through Isaac, possessing lands and blessing generations [3], so that he acted to sacrifice Isaac on the alter, believing that God would raise him from the ashes [4]. For this, he was counted as righteous -- he was called a friend of God. Just as the body apart from the spirit is dead, a so-called faith in the gospel that rejects its promise is dead.

Notes:

[1] Genesis 15:1-6, Romans 4:19-21. Religious hypocrites complain that Christians have adopted a "Greek" view of theology, such that they make a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the material, resulting in a retreat from participation in culture, such as in arts and politics. But these hypocrites perform violent surgery on the gospel itself, embracing some promises as spiritual and worthy, while crucifying other promises as material and inferior, using those they call "heretics" as scapegoats in order expunge these blessings that Christ purchased with his own blood.

[2] Hebrews 11:11-12.

[3] To establish the kingdom of God in "culture" is not a mandate to be accomplished by the effort of man, but a promise to be accomplished by the power of God. Those who boast most loudly about this "mandate" are often also those who fail most miserably at it, addressing symptoms but never changing hearts, because they wish to glorify their own wisdom and labor.

[4] Hebrews 11:17-19.

19. What Does God Want?

God is sovereign. He does whatever he wants. What does he want? He wants to keep his word. He wants to fulfill his promises regarding healing, prophecy, and all kinds of miracles.

The Christian cessationist is a hypocrite, but the greatest hypocrite is the Calvinist cessationist. He claims to believe in the sovereignty of God, but refuses to let God do what he wants.

Thus all his condemnations against the Arminians return to himself, and with much greater force due to his hypocrisy. No open theist, no atheist, and even no Satanist is as much a hypocrite as the cessationist.

God is not a sovereign liar or a sovereign loser. He is eager to keep his word, and because he is sovereign, he is also able to do it.

20. How Can It Be Wrong?

Preacher: This doctrine is a demonic heresy. Here are dozens of articles that I have written with biblical arguments to prove it.

Otaku: I am not going to answer your biblical arguments. All I know is that Calvin taught this doctrine, so it must not be as bad as you say.

Preacher: David committed adultery with a woman and murdered her husband, but since the Bible says that he was a man after God's own heart, then by your reasoning, it must mean that adultery and murder are not that bad, or even good. You have it in reverse. Don't judge God by the word of Calvin but judge Calvin by the word of God. Let me tell you this: If your faith is built on Calvin or any man, then you are unsaved, and you are still in your sin. Your urgent need is not to argue theology with anyone, as if you know anything, but to repent and turn to Jesus Christ.

Otaku: Whatever. The historic creed adopted by my tradition teaches it, so it cannot be heresy....No, I don't mean that creed. That one contradicts what I believe. No...not that one either. I think only heretics like that one. Here, let me show you...this one. There! See this in my creed? Divine providence and confirmation! How could this creed have come about and passed down these centuries, if not by God's arrangement?

Preacher: That's brilliant. It's like you don't have to think at all.

21. Marks of a True Church

Cessationists include as marks of a true church those things that they can control and counterfeit, but they exclude the things that only God can do, even though the Bible promises and prescribes them as the gospel. Why? This is so that their churches will not be exposed as fakes and scams.

Where the gospel is preached and practiced, there will be healing, prophecy, and all kinds of signs and wonders*. God will come to and dwell in the true church, and he will act among and act through his people. One necessary mark of the true church is that God is there! And there he will do what only he can do.

The miraculous manifestations of the Spirit are given to all believers. A lack of power must be a mark of a defective or counterfeit church. The false church will fight against this so as to draw attention away from the fact that the glory of God has departed from it, or that it has never been there in the first place. It will condemn the gospel to justify itself.

* Matthew 21:21, Mark 11:23, John 14:12, Acts 2:17-18, 14:8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:7, 14:26, Galatians 3:5, James 5:14-18, and many more.

22. Every Doctrine in Every Sentence, Please

You are correct in saying that these Christians are very narrow in how they read and critique others. When we make the point that it is in fact biblical to teach that we should "accept Jesus Christ," "confess him as Lord," and "ask him into your heart," they jump on us and say that we neglect repentance. But the topic is that they have often misrepresented those who preach the gospel using these expressions, and even rejected these expressions that come from Scripture. Their response is a red herring. Whatever point you are trying to make, religious otaku answer with that one thing they care about, and it indicates how little they know. I grasp repentance, and most likely preach it longer, stronger, and more often than they do, but they never grasped my point.

You know how much I refer to the Bible and expound on the Bible, but often when I say something that so-called Christians do not want to accept, they would complain, "He didn't put a Bible reference on that!" Attaching a Bible reference on something does not automatically make it right, and it exposes their ignorance if they challenge me like this on something that should be common knowledge among Christians. We cannot fit a whole systematic theology into every paragraph. Even they cannot do this with the doctrines that they are obsessed about.

The Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:30-31). Where is the repentance? Paul mentioned nothing about it, or Luke did not see fit to record it. So did they both deny the necessity of repentance, or did they mention it in other places? We also teach repentance in other places, many other places.

Likewise, Paul wrote, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Romans 10:9-10). Where is the repentance? Where is the mention of sin? The atonement? Where is the Trinity? The deity of Christ? The incarnation? Nothing! He did not even mention the existence of God. Does that mean I can be saved by believing in Christ without believing in God?

But of course Paul preached repentance in many places, as I am sure that you have, and I know I have. On the other hand, have these people preached that we should "accept" Jesus Christ, as the Bible teaches, or denied it? Have they preached that we get saved by "confessing" Jesus Christ, as the Bible teaches, or denied that it is so simple? And have they preached that we should "ask Jesus into our hearts," as the Bible teaches, or said that this is a shallow and compromised gospel?

I know the kind of people you referred to. They are proud of their emphasis on repentance, but they do not truly grasp it. They often end up partially crediting our salvation to our repentance and much seeking, demanding these things from people in a way that satisfies them, instead of trusting in the blood and the righteousness of Christ. Repentance in them

is only a form of self-righteousness. In fact, many of these critics are less likely to be saved than the "ask Jesus into your heart" crowd that they hate so much, because they are much more self-righteous.

From now on, unless they mention the Trinity, sin, atonement, the deity of Christ, the inspiration of Scripture, and every conceivable biblical doctrine, and include at least one biblical reference in support of each point, in every clause that they say, you can challenge them by their own standard – that they neglect or even deny these doctrines, that they do not refer to the Bible, and thus condemn themselves.

Do you like cats? If you like cats, complain that they neglect to show how their points relate to cats. Forget what they are actually saying. The whole thing is a failure if they do not mention cats. This is how such discussions are conducted. This is not far from the kind of criticisms often leveled against me. What does it mean? It means they have nothing, and know nothing.

Of course they would want to complain about what I am saying here, but I don't want to hear it, and don't need to hear it, unless they meet their own standard in their response to me. They must include every biblical doctrine in every clause, with biblical references and quotations, and they must relate every point to that one doctrine that I happen to care about the most at the moment I read it. Otherwise, I will answer them in the same way that they often try to dismiss me, and we know they think it is the most biblical and intelligent answer.

"Christians" are their own worst enemies, because they are so stupid, and they are so self-righteous about it.

From: email

23. Cessationism: The Great Apostasy

Cessationism reduces Christian doctrine into non-Christian experience. Cessationism is one of the greatest evils in human history, not only in church history. This demonic heresy has inflicted incalculable damage to humankind. It has caused the unnecessary suffering, confusion, and death of millions of people by denying to them the power of Jesus Christ.

You must fight cessationism with all the strength that God gives you. Confront this great apostasy. It is important to condemn the doctrine and the people who believe it and teach it, but even more importantly, you must be a doer of the word, and not only a hearer or debater. By faith, demonstrate the power that God has given us. Heal the sick. Cast out demons. Prophecy. Work miracles.

I recommend that you begin with the ministry of healing. There is ample biblical basis for it. Jesus was obsessed with it. The apostles and believers in the Bible could not stop doing it. There are many contemporary examples, often documented in testimonies, recordings, and medical documents. You can watch some this week in some churches. It is an evident demonstration of the gospel. And it benefits those who receive it.

Pray for the sick. Heal them in the name of Jesus. Do not give up if you do not experience success at first. The word of God commands it and promises it, so it must work. Even if you have no man to train you, if you will obey God by faith, God will see to it that you experience success, and then you will go from faith to faith, and glory to glory.

From: email

24. Unbelief: Determined to Die

Pray according to the promises of God. Exercise your faith. Don't lean on anyone else, not me, not anyone. Don't ask for as many people to pray as possible. In most cases, it makes things worse when you ask more Christians to pray, because most people pray in unbelief, and their prayers are practically curses against the sick person. Ask for more people to pray with you only if they have faith. Jesus would throw a person's own family members out of the room. He threw his own disciples out of the room and allowed only several to remain.

Sometimes the sick person has already decided he is going to die because it is "God's will." He refuses to listen to God's word, because apart from God's word, he has decided what is God's will for him. Those who teach the doctrine of cessationism will be responsible for his death. Those who teach the perversion of divine sovereignty will have his blood on their hands. These are those who teach that something is up to "God's will" even though God has already made a promise regarding it. Thus I refer to most of those who teach divine sovereignty. They are murderers. We teach the strongest version of God's sovereignty, but we also teach that God's word has been established, so that it is because he is sovereign that we know we shall always be healed when we receive by faith.

Remember that many of the detailed instances of healing in the Gospels say that the sick came to Jesus in faith, and not that they already decided to die or that sickness was God's will. So this issue might affect the outcome. It is unbelief. It is a demonic stronghold pretending to be pious sound doctrine. Instead of praying and praying and praying, you should first attempt to talk the person out of dying and into believing God's promises on healing. Preach the gospel to him – the only gospel in the Bible is one that comes with physical healing. If the person has lost consciousness, then there is not much you can do about this part, unless you can command him to regain consciousness in the name of Jesus, so that you can talk to him.

As you pray, focus on what God says, not what I say or what the doctors say. Pray according to God's word, and you will have no regrets.

From: email

25. By Faith, Anything Can Happen

If something is contrary to the word of God, then you cannot have faith for it, because sin is not faith. Otherwise, anything is possible to faith.

Jesus received money from a fish's mouth. He changed water into wine. It was not for anyone's survival, but for pleasure, and perhaps for the host to save face. He multiplied food. He performed the miracle not only to ensure the people's survival, because he made too much food. There were thousands of poor and hungry people, but there were still baskets of leftovers. This is the gospel. He taught the people to seek first the kingdom of God, and then all the things that the pagans run after, like food and clothing, will be added to them. This is the Jesus condemned today by the faithful pastors, the orthodox scholars, the elite apologists, and the defenders of the faith. They boast that they are untainted by a gospel of health and wealth, but they are the worse heretics, because they preach a different Jesus.

God commanded ravens to bring food to Elijah. Then he sent the prophet to a widow. She was about to use up the last of her supply, and prepared herself to die. But once she received the prophet, her jar of flour was not used up and her jug of oil did not run dry. There are contemporary testimonies similar to this. In one instance, a Bible school drew rice from a container that did not run out for an extended period of time. Do you find this incredible? I do not. If we can believe the Bible's report on Elijah and Jesus, then we can believe that the same things can happen today. Certainly, those who make false claims are liars, but because I have the Bible, I do not need modern examples to have faith that miracles happen. Those who remain in unbelief make God himself into a liar, and incur infinitely greater guilt.

If there is faith, then nothing is too farfetched. Most of the time, you would care only about the outcome so that you would not need to specify the means by which it comes, unless God inspires you to do it, or unless you want to do it for some reason. If you have faith for it, you can have it. The woman with a bleeding problem specified the way she would receive healing. She said, "If I can just touch his clothes, I will be healed," and she was. A man asked Jesus to heal his servant and said that the Lord should only speak the word at a distance, even though Jesus already said that he would go there himself. His faith actually changed and upgraded the approach Jesus intended to take. And the miracle happened according to the man's faith.

The issue is not what you want, or how you want it, but whether you have faith for it. If you have faith for it, then anything can happen. Although Jesus said as much himself, people would harshly criticize when we say the same thing. This is because they have no faith, and they wish to make excuses for themselves.

From: email

26. Cessationism: The Broken Cisterns

My statement on expansionism is interested in addressing only the cessationism and continuationism debate. Both are wrong, although cessationism is much worse. Cessationism is an outright rejection of the gospel. Continuationism, by allowing the anti-gospel group to define the terms of the doctrine, becomes a compromise of the gospel. Jesus commanded expansion, not continuation.

The gospel doctrine is that more and more people should exercise miraculous power by faith, by the Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, and this power should increase from generation to generation. Cessationism is against this. Continuationism is inadequate to represent this. Continuationism is very lame compared to what the gospel actually teaches.

As for your question, if you wish to relate this to Theonomy and Reconstructionism, then my first comment would be that every Theonomist and Reconstructionist who is a cessationist is also a liar and a hypocrite. If you want to apply God's law to mankind and reconstruct society according to God's word, then you must do it with the gospel, and the gospel is as I stated above -- expanding the participation and magnitude of the saving message and miracle power in the name of Christ.

The cessationist Theonomist and Reconstructionist -- like any cessationist -- is not truly interested in extending Christ's kingdom, but in implementing his own personal philosophy about the proper operation of society. He wants to mold society in his own image -- perhaps a conservative political philosophy labeled "Christian" -- but not the image of Christ.

A program that seeks to change society by Jesus Christ would preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, and prophesy before it even thinks about controlling politics, education, and so on. If there is to be any legitimacy to Theonomy and Reconstructionism, then it must be an aspect of expansionism -- extending the kingdom of God by spiritual and miraculous power.

Most Theonomists and Reconstructionists are cessationists. Therefore, I do not think they should even be talking about the topic, or how they should transform society. They have forsaken Jesus Christ, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. This ought to be the epitaph of every cessationist.

From: email

27. Move Forward By Faith

When it comes to faith, healing, prophecy, and such things, one must become a doer of the word, and not a hearer only. Most Christian scholars are not doers of the word in this area, even those who side with the power of God. They just like to argue back and forth about it. Do not assume that more convoluted scholarship equals more knowledge, more accuracy, and more power. In this area, the reverse seems to be true for all three items. Reading these people gives you the feeling that you are making progress, but usually you are not. You will find more knowledge and encouragement from those who teach about these things directly and simply, without excuses and complications, and who actually intend for you to do them, and for these things to happen in your life.

If you do not experience immediate success, do not allow that to become an excuse. God is not hindering you from being a doer of the word. If you lay hands on a thousand sick people and all of them die instantly, you are still doing what God teaches you to do, well, except for having enough faith. When Jesus' disciples asked him why they failed, he answered that it was because of their unbelief. You see, they also failed at times, even though they were directly commissioned by the Lord. It takes faith to succeed. If you fail constantly, then among other things, you have a problem with unbelief. That said, even with weak faith, if you really lay hands on a thousand people, I seriously, seriously doubt not one of them would receive healing. Even for a beginner, it would not surprise me if ten, fifty, a hundred, five hundred, or seven hundred of the people receive healing, a number of them probably through very visible and spectacular miracles.

Jesus said that Satan comes to steal the word of God. I know the word of God, but if Satan comes with sickness and I give up, then he has stolen it. If I do the word of God, and if I act as if the word of God is true, then I have established my life on it. As Jesus said, one builds on sand, and one builds on rock. Much of what passes for Christian scholarship is nothing other than pretentious sophistication constructed on a giant horse toilet. It does not teach you to act on God's word by faith.

There is no need to ask God for faith. God's word says that when you pray with doubt, don't even think that you will get anything from him. So if you need faith and pray for it, on what basis do you expect God to give you faith? You will need faith to ask God for faith, don't you? The Bible says faith comes by hearing the word of God. No -- not, by reading scholarly debates about the word of God, but the word of God itself. What does God say about healing and miracles? What are his commands and promises? Read them, and think about them day and night. Confess them with your mouth. This is how you obtain faith. If you think your faith is too weak to ask God for miracles, then don't ask for them. Just start doing what he says. You don't need to ask God to send Jesus to the cross so you can be forgiven. You just assume Jesus has done his work and you take your forgiveness. It is the same with healing and other aspects of God's power. Even with splitting the Red Sea, God told Moses, "Why are you talking to me? Move forward."

From: email

28. What is Mature Doctrine?

If you ask me what brand of toilet paper Calvin thought that Luther claimed that Augustine imagined that Jesus preferred, so that you can debate this or that fellow on your social media group, I will probably not answer you, forever. This might be a small exaggeration, but many sophisticated "Christians" remain on this level of discussion. Rather, I am more eager to answer those who ask about how to be a doer of the word of God, about the goodness of God as applied to their suffering, about operating in the powers of the Spirit, about receiving and ministering healing, or about ministering the many promises of God to those who are in pain and confusion. As Paul said, "However, we do speak a message of wisdom among the mature...what God has prepared for those who love him...that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:6, 9, 12). What is mature doctrine? It is not what we do for God, but what God does for us (1 John 4:10).

Jesus said that a person cannot be his disciple unless he first counts the cost, and then renounces everyone and everything to follow him (Luke 14:26-33). This is not the pinnacle of spiritual maturity, but it is the beginning. This is what spiritual infants do. We repent of our transgressions and reorient our lives on Jesus Christ. We become God-centered. We maintain this condition as we continue, but as we walk with God and mature in spirit, we come to the realization that God is not in fact served by human hands, as if he needs anyone (Acts 17:25). Even our service comes from him (2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Colossians 1:29). Although the gospel demands total commitment, since the beginning it is not about what we do for God, but what God does for us, in all areas of our lives, by Jesus Christ (Romans 8:31-32). We truly come to know him as the Father that Jesus talked about, the one who is greater than all (John 10:29), the one who supplies everything (Psalm 103:2-5, Matthew 7:32-33, Philippians 4:19).

Therefore, spiritual maturity must entail learning more about the benefits that God has given us in Christ, and then receiving and experiencing them (1 Corinthians 2:12). For this reason, Paul prayed that Christians would receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know God, to know the gospel hope and inheritance, and to know the super-surpassing power that God has put to work in us, which is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1:15-22). He prayed that Christians would be strengthened with power in their spirits, to have power to grasp all the dimensions of the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Do your favorite preachers and theologians teach you this? They command you to serve the gospel. Good! But what gospel? Do they also teach you how to receive healing miracles and material supplies from God? Do they teach you how to receive things from God by faith? Jesus taught these things as gospel, intertwined with the doctrines of faith, the atonement, and the Fatherhood of God (Matthew 6:32-33, 7:7-11, 8:16-17, Mark 9:23, 11:23-24, Luke 8:50, 18:1-8, John 11:40, 15:7, 15:16, 16:26-27, and many more). If they do not teach these things, then they are not the spiritual giants you think they are. All of their refined scholarship offers you an illusion of knowledge and progress, but in fact keeps you at the starting line along with them. Your response says a lot about you. Do you put up with this, or do you want more (2 Corinthians 11:4)? It takes spiritual power to grasp

the magnitude of divine love toward us. Learning more and more about God's love for us in more categories is not for babies, but adults, because it takes spiritual strength and maturity to grasp it.

Self-righteous critics consider themselves mature in spirit, in character and knowledge, and they attack those who preach God's benefits to the people, calling it a shallow and self-centered gospel. The truth is that they reverse the program of Christ, and this shows that they are only spiritual infants, unable to build upon the basics. There are certain blessings from God that they outright condemn, even though these things are explicitly promised in the gospel. The no-faith "Christians" teach a gospel that is flat, not a gospel that is full. If they teach the love of Christ at all, they can handle only one dimension of it. Why? It is not because they are mature, spiritual, and God-centered, but because they are weak. WEAK! It takes power in the inner man to grasp and accept the love of God, more and more and more, and in all its dimensions. Pay attention: in ALL its dimensions. The love of God is not restricted to what you call the spiritual and ethical dimensions, but all the dimensions of reality, and all the dimensions that he expressed through Jesus Christ.

If you are selective about the blessings of God, then you are spiritually feeble and immature. If you accept his forgiveness but reject his healing, then you are weak. If you embrace his discipline but refuse his prosperity, then you are a baby. You are not some epic apologist, some defender of the faith. You are just a crybaby. What's the matter? Why are you upset? Is Uncle Cheung making you cry? Is he telling everybody the truth about you, and you don't like it? What can you do, you stupid crybaby? Oh, is Uncle Cheung being too harsh again? Is he hurting your little feelings? Aww, you poor stupid baby. But I see through this excuse as well. You are trying to change the topic and put the burden on me without facing the truth yourself, but I will drag you by the neck right back to it. Grow up! Learn about the things that belong to you in Christ, if someone like you is indeed in Christ, and learn to receive these things from God by faith.

If you preach about suffering for the gospel but not about victory by the gospel, at times even producing demonstrable and miraculous effects in the world by the power of Christ, then you are a false shepherd (Acts 4:29-31, 5:19, 13:8-12, 16:25-26). Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world!" He did this not only in some spiritual or ethical sense, but in all dimensions and all realms (Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 4:8), so that everything in heaven, on earth, and under the earth must bow to his name (Philippians 2:9-11). Unless you preach faith and victory, grace and blessing, you are too weak to lead, and too stupid to teach. You are so spiritually lame that you cannot even see God as your Father, blessing and supplying you abundantly in all things, who is truly your all in all.

29. "For the Glory of God"

As you acknowledged, some people often say "for the glory of God" to justify what they like to do. The verse you mentioned says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let us make three observations about it. First, it does not teach that you can do whatever you want, but that when you do something, you should do it for the glory of God. You cannot murder someone "for the glory of God." Second, it does not teach that when we do something, we should say that we do it for the glory of God, but that we should do it for the glory of God. You cannot rape someone "for the glory of God" just by saying it or thinking it. Third, it does not teach that you should do everything, but that when you do something, you should do it for the glory of God.

Thus it settles almost nothing when we only throw around the phrase "for the glory of God." What should we do? How should we do it? What does it mean to do this thing for the glory of God? In the case of this verse, Paul is talking about eating, and specifically eating food that has been offered in idol worship. He says that you may eat whatever is placed before you "without raising questions" (v. 27). However, if it is pointed out that the food has been used in idol worship, "then do not eat it" (v. 28). Again, he says, "Then do NOT eat it." It is in this context that he says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

In other words, to do something "for the glory of God" would sometimes mean that you do NOT do it, that you walk away from it. If it is pointed out to you that the food has been offered to idols a hundred times out of a hundred parties you attend "for the glory of God," it would mean that you should never eat in any of these parties. In this scenario, to DO something for the glory of God would mean that you NEVER do it. Of course, this would bother someone who wishes to attend these parties, socialize with unbelievers, and enjoy drinking and eating with them — and just slap "for the glory of God" on the whole thing and call it ministry.

The verse is used by followers of a religious tradition that rejects a distinction between the sacred and secular, even claiming that all things are "holy," and that boasts of a "mandate" to engage culture. They want to make their silly hobbies and talents into an epic battle between good and evil. So they throw themselves into their arts and sports, even drinking and smoking, "for the glory of God." It is just a lie that they tell themselves, and that they wish others would believe, in order to justify what they want to do in the first place.

They especially enjoy engaging in politics "for the glory of God," often not even doing anything in politics, but only talking about politics. This is because they have no faith in the gospel as the power of God to shape the world and save those who believe. They have rejected the gospel, which comes upon us with spiritual power, and goes forth from us with miracles of healing and prophecy, and can never be separated from these things. The Bible knows no gospel without miracle power.

Indeed, it is a very human tendency — a very sinful tendency. Up to the time before Christ ascended to heaven, the disciples still asked, "When are you going to restore our political power?" Jesus answered, "It is none of your business. But you will receive spiritual power — miracle power — when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (see Acts 1:6-8). Nowadays, those who call themselves Christians claim that they have the Spirit, even though they refuse to receive him and even though they reject this miraculous power, and then they pursue political power for themselves, in the name of Christ, even in contradiction to his command.

They make the reception of Christ and the reception of the Spirit into an identical event, so that by their mere verbal confession of Christ they can obscure the fact that they do not have the Spirit. However, the Bible makes the reception of the Spirit and the reception of miracle power into an identical event, so by their reasoning — that the reception of Christ and the Spirit are identical — the reception of Christ is also the reception of miracle power. Thus their doctrine demands the conclusion that unless they possess this miracle power, they have not received Christ. They are unsaved. They remain in their sins, and they will burn in hell. They have damned themselves by their false doctrine.

In any case, there is no excuse for this obsession with political power after we have read how Christ answered the disciples, and after the Holy Spirit has been poured out, so that anyone who has faith can receive a superhuman boldness and power. The question they asked the Lord? It never came up again. After they received the Spirit, they talked about miracles, healing, and signs and wonders (Acts 4:29-30), not politics, not sports, not the arts, and not "culture." So why are Christians asking it? Why are Christians thinking like the disciples before the ascent of Christ and the descent of the Spirit? It is because they still do not have the Spirit, and do not have the power.

There is a place for politics in our dealings with the world, just as we can participate in the areas of business, education, science, and such things. However, unless someone demonstrates that he has received the Spirit, along with the power that this necessarily entails, he has no biblical basis to even start asking about politics, let alone actively teaching about it or engaging in it. He has no biblical basis to demand our attention. If he does not even try to lay hands on the sick, if he speaks against healing and prophecy, or if he is a cessationist, he should SHUT UP about politics. He desperately grasps for a substitute for God — a stand-in for Jesus Christ. He desperately reaches for a cultural philosophy to replace a gospel of faith and power.

Let us return to 1 Corinthians 10. Verse 27 says, "If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience." See that? He says, "and you want to go." It is not some cultural project. It is not some mission feast. You go because you want to go. For many Christians, they go because they enjoy non-Christian things more than Christian things, and they want an excuse to maintain their ties to their old life, and still be able to stay on their religious high horse in criticizing others for their self-centered messages, their seeker-friendly evangelism, and their health and wealth doctrines — even when the doctrines are explicit gospel promises. So they drag themselves to these non-Christian events. What sacrifice! What? They say there are no

apostles today? Surely they are the apostles of modern times! No healing. No prophecy. No gospel. No problem! They are making movies and going to parties for the glory of God. Genius. If Paul had thought of that, he would not have had to suffer so.

You do something because you want to do it. Stop dragging God into it. You step away from your preaching, praying, studying, and other spiritual activities to do it. There is no need to glorify what you do to make it sound spiritual. Just be honest about it. If something is right, do it. If something is acceptable, do it when you want to. If something is acceptable but becomes a stumbling block to yourself or others, then do not do it. It is that simple. Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God, and this might sometimes mean that you do NOT eat that thing, drink that thing, watch that movie, attend that party, support that parade, or whatever. And when you do eat that thing, drink that thing, watch that movie, attend that party, support that parade, or whatever, do not imagine that you are performing mass evangelism or changing the course of history. You are no hero. You are just doing what you want to do. God's way to perform evangelism and change history has always been the way of preaching and healing, delivering messages and miracles in the name of Jesus Christ. Any doctrine that distracts from this is false doctrine.

We have also answered your question about the martial arts. There are limited practical benefits such as physical exercise, and learning to defend yourself and others. But mainly, you do it because you want to. Some schools of martial arts are not purely practical in nature, but are rooted in or associated with false religions. Be honest about this. If you are going to practice martial arts, then do it "for the glory of God." This means that you should NOT do it if a spiritual issue comes up that you cannot resolve. If the style you practice is tied to false religion or philosophy, then to do it for the glory of God would mean that you must stop doing it or switch to another style. If your practice of martial arts or if the style you practice becomes a stumbling block to someone else, then to do it for the glory of God would mean that you must stop doing it, at least not in that person's presence or until you discuss it with him, or until you switch to another style. A Christian is doing something like this because he wants to, and he can keep on doing it; however, to do it "for the glory of God" often does not offer a justification, but rather imposes a restriction.

From: email

30. The Screech of Satan

You asked about 2 Kings 20:1-6. King Hezekiah was ill, and God said to him by Isaiah: "Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover" (2 Kings 20:1). There was no "if" or "but" or "unless." It was a definite prophecy. God said that he would not recover from the sickness, but that he would die. Instead of saying, "Let the will of God be done," Hezekiah prayed and told God to remember the man's faithfulness. Although God already said, "You will not recover," he told Isaiah to march right back into the room and announce, "I will heal you. I will add fifteen years to your life."

This should not puzzle us, even though we believe that God's sovereignty is absolute and exhaustive. What Isaiah said was accurate. Hezekiah would have died from his sickness, but then he interacted with God's established principles and prayed, and he received healing. The case is rather simple. God announced what would happen relative to Hezekiah condition. Then Hezekiah interacted with God's revealed precept, and God announced what would happen relative to Hezekiah new condition. If we approach this from the perspective of metaphysics from start to finish, removing all relative considerations, then we must add some nuance, but we are not talking about metaphysics. Most of the time, the Bible speaks about how we interact with God and how our faith relates to our outcome. There is no problem and no mystery here.

As Jeremiah 18 says, "Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done?' declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds'" (v. 5-11).

I want us to notice three things. First, the passage is a declaration of God's sovereignty, not man's freedom (v. 6). Paul takes up the metaphor of the potter and applies it to God's sovereignty in converting and hardening people (Romans 9:10-24). His sovereignty includes direct control over the hearts and decisions of men. Second, God's sovereignty does not destroy his interaction with men, but becomes the basis for such interaction (v. 7-10). He is sovereign, therefore he can do whatever he wants — so that if he declares judgment, but the men repent, he is sovereign to "relent of the disaster," and if he declares blessing, but the men backslide, then he is sovereign to "relent of the good." If our theology stumbles over this, it is because we have made false assumptions based on the first point. This is what has happened in standard Calvinism that claims to affirm the doctrine of divine sovereignty as well as much of Evangelicalism that denies an absolute version of divine sovereignty. Their appeal to "the will of God" is grossly defective.

Third, our preaching should reflect the reality of this interaction between God and men, this interplay between our faith and our outcome. In other words, your situation should provoke a response from you, and this response would influence the outcome. Just as verse 6 is consistent with verse 11, God's sovereignty is entirely consistent with preaching to the people: "Repent, and you will be saved. Have faith, and you will be healed." In fact, if we do not preach this way, it can only mean that we have perverted the doctrine of the sovereignty of God (v. 6), so that we have overturned the doctrine of our interaction with God (v. 7-10). Again, if we preach, "Have faith, and then God's promises will happen to you — if it is the will of God," then we have perverted verse 6, and totally ignored verses 7-10. Rather, based on 2 Kings and Jeremiah 18, we must preach, "God is sovereign, therefore, even if he tells you right to your face that you will die from your sickness, if you will lay hold on his promises of healing by faith, then he will heal you instead." This is what happened with Hezekiah. This is what was said through Jeremiah. Since this is God's own application of the doctrine of divine sovereignty, if one does not preach this way, he does not believe in the biblical doctrine of divine sovereignty.

God does not sovereignly break his own promises. However, the standard Calvinist or Evangelical applies the doctrine of divine sovereignty in precisely this way — he makes God into a sovereign liar, so that regardless of what God has promised, it would happen only "if it is the will of God." His doctrine is that God will sovereignly keep his written promises only when he decides to do it in each instance. Then this fellow dares to accuse the "charismatic" for undermining the written word of God! Hypocrite! The standard Calvinist or Evangelical in fact knows very little about God's sovereignty. And then he adds a mountain of his own theories and perversions on top of what little he knows. He has learned very little, very narrowly, and then he runs away from the rest of the Bible thinking he knows what he needs to know, and he uses what he thinks he knows to attack others. He ends up attacking God's promises, while imagining that he is affirming God's nature and honor. If we apply the doctrine of divine sovereignty the way God himself does it, then we will say, "God is sovereign, therefore even if he has announced that you will die from your sickness, if you will pray in faith, he will sovereignly honor his word and heal you." If you have faith, why would you receive healing even if the circumstance appears unchangeably determined, and even if God himself declares "You will die" and "You will not recover" by a special revelation on a level that could take a permanent place in Scripture? How could such a thing happen just because you have faith? Because God is sovereign. And my doctrine of divine sovereignty is just that strong. I will believe it as strong as he teaches it.

The Bible is God's middle finger to the standard Calvinist or Evangelical, or the cessationist with his "will of God" excuse. God himself wants us to know that even if he says to your face, by super-prophet Isaiah no less, "Pack it up! You are gonna die!" — you can STILL pray and receive your healing or miracle. Imagine what Calvin would have done if an angel had said to him, "Let me go"? Would he have obeyed the "will of God"? But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Imagine what Spurgeon would have done if God had declared, "I will kill them!" Would he have cowered and cried, "Oh, let your will be done!" But Moses said, "No! If you do this, what would people think of you?" What would

your favorite theologian have done if Jesus had said to him, "I am not sent to you" and "It is not right to give what belongs to the children to a dog like you"? But a Gentile woman without a covenant said, "But even the dogs can have the crumbs," and still received her miracle of healing. What? Did Jacob and Moses defy the sovereignty of God? But is God someone who can be defied like this? Did the woman harass Jesus and overturned his decision? But was Jesus someone who could be bullied? Or, perhaps this has been the way of faith all along, and those who consider themselves most educated in the things of God are those who are least familiar with the way of faith? If you claim that your teachers would have acted the same way, then I rejoice. Perhaps they would have, although I doubt it. But either you admit that your teachers never knew the way of faith, in which case you ought to adjust your opinion of them accordingly, or you must start acting the same way — in the way of faith — and receive from God no matter what. Which is it? Ah, you will take the third way — argue and defer, protest and delay, accuse and excuse.

What would I have done? Well, what have I done numerous times? My contract with God says that healing belongs to me, so healing belongs to me. This is the final word. And there are many other things in the contract. Even if I have no contract with God, as the Gentile woman who entreated Jesus for her daughter, I will still get it by faith, since God has made a standing contract with faith. This aspect of God is what Calvinists, Evangelicals, and the cessationists have never known, and that they would persecute in others, even though it is the gospel. Didn't people like Jacob and Moses believe in God's sovereignty? Of course they did. Don't I? Of course I do. The problem is that the Calvinists, Evangelicals, and cessationists hold on to one thing about the word of God, twist it and adopt it as their own, and then interpret all of God's word by it, even if it must overturn everything else in God's word in the process. But this is the same thing that Arminians do, and the same thing that Open Theists do, only that they take hold of other things that they think they see in the word of God as the controlling principles.

They claim to regard Scripture as the very word of God, and accuse "charismatics" for seeking extra revelations, even though the charismatics seek the very things promised in Scripture. In any case, they claim to regard Scripture as the word of God, but then they accept circumstance and outcome as the will of God. Rather than holding to what God has commanded and promised as the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2), they take whatever happens as the will of God. If they pray according to a promise from God and receive a different outcome, they take that as the will of God, when they ought to insist on getting what God has already said. Thus regardless of what they claim about themselves, in practice they are those who show the least respect for Scripture out of all the schools of religious thought, even less respect than some heathens who are without a covenant. They look even worse in light of the fact that they were surpassed by Hezekiah, who was very ill, who had his death announced to him by someone no less than Isaiah, who had access to a fraction of the sacred writings available to us, who lived before the time of Christ, and who could not wield the name of Jesus or the power of the Spirit. This Hezekiah still received his healing. These Christians receive nothing, and persecute those who even try. It is a total, complete, flat-out failure of faith.

There is an application for prophecy that I will not take time to discuss. It is the fact that what appears to be a failed prophecy is not always a false prophecy. As in Isaiah's case, a prophecy could be true at the time and in the context that it is given, but then something changes, sometimes in response to the prophecy, so that the prophecy no longer applies. Prophecy must be judged, and we must not excuse a false prophecy. However, if someone is ignorant of the basic principles of prophecy and how God interacts with men, how is he qualified to judge prophecy, or to say anything, or criticize anyone? Does he expect us to impose accountability on those who prophesy, but impose no accountability on him who judges prophecy, or even who dismisses the entire practice of prophecy? He wants to play the expert, but he is so far behind in spiritual things that he cannot even see the starting line from where he is. He wants to teach people, correct people, and refute the fanatics. But he knows nothing about God's sovereignty, and he knows nothing about healing, and he knows nothing about prophecy. He is just a spiritual clown to us. He is just a dunce, dancing stupidly, making funny noises.

Let us conclude with a crucial point. The Bible uses God's sovereignty to explain why some people cannot believe the gospel, and therefore cannot receive the promise of God (John 6:44, 65, 10:26, Romans 9:18). They are doomed, and will not be saved. The Bible never uses God's sovereignty to assert that some people could believe the promise and still cannot receive because of the will of God. Therefore, the more someone claims that he does not receive the promise of God because of the will of God, the more he insists that he is reprobate, made for damnation, and reserved for everlasting torture in the fires of hell. His doctrine is not the voice of Christ, but the screech of Satan.

From: email

31. God and Sickness

God uses sickness as a weapon against his enemies. This occurs most notably in wars in which he stood up for his people and fought for them. For example, some of the plagues against Egypt involved diseases. Later he included sickness in the curse of the law, and he reminded the people of the diseases he released in Egypt (Deuteronomy 28:21-22, 27-28, 35, 58-60). He listed things like fever, tumors, skin disease, mental illness, blindness, afflictions in the limbs, chronic illnesses, and so on. And he added, "The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed" (v. 61). Thus the curse of the law included every disease. But Paul said, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13). Therefore, Christ has redeemed us from every disease. The Christian has been redeemed from cancer, arthritis, blindness, mental illness, and every disease whether it is listed or not listed in the Bible. This is gospel. This is good news to those who believe.

Of course theologians wish to spiritualize this, so that they could sidestep it altogether. They complain that uneducated believers allegorize the Bible, but the theologians are the worst offenders. These would be some of the same scholars who declare that Christians must not distinguish between the spiritual and the physical, the sacred and the secular, that God is for all of life. Stupid hypocrites. To obscure their unbelief, they would spiritualize redemption. But Paul said that we have been redeemed from the curse of the law, and there is no way to spiritualize the entire curse of the law when God referred to poverty, hunger, warfare, and the same plagues that he sent upon Egypt. God did not spiritually or figuratively destroy Egypt — the plagues were physical. The curse of the law did not refer to spiritual fever, mystical tumors, metaphorical skin disease, virtual joint afflictions — no, they were physical diseases. And Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law — yeah, THAT curse. So Christ redeemed us from physical diseases. Why doesn't every Christian experience complete healing? Paul added that the blessing of Abraham is received by faith (Galatians 3:14).

Self-righteous religionists ordain themselves to police the Christian world, claiming that people cater to itching ears and fail to preach the gospel. But do they preach this? Do they preach that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and that the curse of the law included every disease, whether listed or not listed in the Bible? If they do, then let us join together and preach this gospel of healing, the good news that Christ has set us free from every disease, that we are no longer under the power of sickness. But if they do not preach this, then they do not preach the gospel, and they have no right to criticize other people. In fact, they have no right to address believers at all, let alone hold degrees and positions among them. If they preach against this, then they are outright anti-gospel, and anti-Christ. Rather than revered as teachers and defenders of the faith, they must be shamed and condemned, even excommunicated. If God uses sickness at all, he would use it against people like them, so that their false doctrine would be fulfilled in their own bodies.

Speaking of people like them, God also uses sickness as judgment against those who desecrate the gospel and commit perverse sins. In some instances, he would wipe out thousands of his own people due to their idolatry and immorality. Paul said that some of the Corinthians were weak, sick, and dead, not because God showered them with the "gift" of sickness — we have noted that it is a curse — but because they had desecrated the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:30). Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Then he said, "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you" (John 5:14). We are not told about the nature of his sin, and whether Jesus was speaking from the perspective of God's judgment against him or of sin opening the door for Satan to inflict him with sickness. Nevertheless, Jesus associated his sickness with his sin, suggesting that the man would not have become sick and would not become sick again if he had stopped sinning. This is something that preachers and theologians often refuse to acknowledge. Even if they admit that sickness is sometimes the result of sin, they still refuse to acknowledge that repentance ought to bring miraculous healing, and that living in faith and righteousness ought to prevent the recurrence of the sickness. This is also a repudiation of the doctrine and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Once Jesus came across a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:1-3). You exclaim, "See! See! Sickness for the glory of God." No. No. HEALING for the glory of God. Jesus said that the work of God would be displayed in the man's life, and the work of God was miraculous healing of the blindness: "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see" (v. 25). The man was moved to faith in Christ as a result: "Then the man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him" (v. 38). The work of God Jesus talked about was healing, and only healing. And this healing brought glory to God. In contrast, when preachers and theologians relate sickness to the glory of God, they refer to the sickness itself, how the man endured it, or how he supposedly benefited from it, rather than a miracle healing. This is a perversion and a rejection of the gospel.

We realize that death and sickness originated in the sin of Adam, and this text reminds us that not every instance of sickness is a result of a person's own sin. But it also reminds us that if there is no sin in the way, then the person ought to receive healing, and the work of God displayed in his life. Even if there is sin, the person can repent, and then the work of God will also be displayed in his life, in both forgiveness and healing: "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven" (James 5:15). There is no excuse not to get healed.

People say, "What about Job?" Well, what about Job? Do you think your preachers and theologians know a lot about him? Tell me, did he have a covenant with God? If he did, what were the terms of the contract? Did it grant him immunity from Satan? Did it promise him healing? If he did not have such a contract, then he was vulnerable. Even then, God had sovereignly blessed him and placed a wall of protection around him before he was afflicted, possibly apart from any promise or covenant (Job 1:10). We know that it was Satan who made him sick. We know that although Job was better than his friends, God still said to him, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Will the

one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him! Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (Job 38:1-2, 40:1-2, 8). And Job replied, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know" (42:3).

Did Job have a covenant? Did he have the covenant of Abraham, or one like it? With Job, God said that the man was faithful but ignorant. But with Abraham, God said that he would not do anything unless he talked it over with his covenant friend (Genesis 18:17, Psalm 25:14, Amos 3:7, John 15:15, James 2:23). What I know is that Abraham had a covenant with God. What I know is that Jesus called sickness satanic bondage, and that someone who has inherited the contract of Abraham ought to be released from it (Luke 13:16). What I know is that Peter called sickness satanic oppression, and that Jesus went about everywhere delivering people from it (Acts 10:38). And I know that "those who believe are children of Abraham," so that "those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Galatians 3:7, 9). So what about Job? He was an example of patience, and we know that Job was faithful but ignorant, but if he did not have a contract with God, then God did much more for him than he was bound to before Satan attacked him. And we know that after this time of suffering God doubled his wealth, healed him, and gave him long life (Job 42:10-17). This is what we know about Job, one who probably had no contract and no promise from God.

But what about Abraham? Do you know about Abraham? What is your excuse? You still say, "What about him? What about her?" But what about the thousands who received healing? Why do you try to find exceptions, if there are exceptions at all, and why do the exceptions always apply to you? If there are indeed exceptions, would they not by definition statistically almost always apply to someone else, so that they may never happen to you even over three lifetimes? It is because you do not have faith, but you want to justify yourself. Why are you asking about Job or anyone else, when you should be asking about Jesus Christ, who gave us God's contract with Abraham through faith? Job was probably vulnerable to Satan even though God blessed him anyway before and after his time of suffering. But Jesus said that Abraham's contract included deliverance from Satan. He even took for granted that Abraham's contract included healing, as much as the children of a household can expect bread on their table (Matthew 15:26). Why ask about someone else, and why consider possible exceptions, unless you have no part in this covenant, and unless you have not joined yourself to Christ? If exceptions to explicit gospel promises are possible, and if they seem to happen to you, then perhaps you are an exception to salvation by faith. Perhaps you have faith in Christ, and God will still send you to hell to burn you forever. The "gift" of hell for the glory of God. You can have that, but I will have the gift of righteousness and eternal life through faith according to his promise, and healing as well.

Thus the Bible teaches that sickness is a weapon, sickness is a curse, sickness is a judgment, sickness is a consequence of sin, sickness is a satanic bondage, and sickness is a satanic oppression. Even if we, in defiance to Scripture, add that sickness could be a gift from God, how likely is it to be such a gift, when sickness is also all these other things? Surely it cannot be a gift in every instance, so Christians should at least receive miracle healing whenever it is not a gift, which is most of the time. But why did Jesus keep destroying

God's gift everywhere he went, in tens of thousands of people? Why did his disciples do the same? Why did their gospel wipe out this gift of sickness everywhere it was preached? It is because sickness is not a gift, but a curse. The gift is healing, not sickness. If you are hungry and I give you food, then the food is the gift, not the hunger. Why do I need to explain something like this? Am I teaching theology to a goldfish? If sickness results in glory to God, it happens when it provides the setting to display the work of God in the form of miracle healing. If there is no healing from God, then there is no glory to God. There is only a curse, a judgment, bondage, and oppression. Total degradation.

Don't you see? If sickness comes from Satan, and we have a contract with God that promises immunity and deliverance, then this is good news. The good news is that we are not passive victims and helpless targets to Satan. And don't you see? If Satan can convince you to just throw your hands up and cry "the will of God!" whenever he does something to you, then you would live as one without a covenant. If Satan can convince you that the covenant offers only "spiritual" benefits — whatever that means — even when he afflicts you in every way he can, and if he can convince you that certain benefits of the covenant have ceased, then again, you would live as one without a covenant. You would live as one who is without God and without hope in this world. The Bible calls sickness a weapon, a curse, a judgment, a consequence, a bondage, and an oppression. Jesus fought it everywhere he went. His disciples fought it everywhere they preached. In contrast, nowadays Christians tend to teach that God could use sickness as a generally beneficial thing, to refine, sanctify, and educate the believer. Even repentance might not clear the way for healing, and faith in his explicit promises might do nothing "unless it is the will of God" (to not break his promise). This is contrary to how the Bible presents the situation. This slaps Jesus right in the face.

32. Satan and Cessationism

We begin the topic with healing, but what we say can apply to other spiritual manifestations. As a form of deception, Satan can sometimes appear to heal. We can make several observations about this. First, the methods are sometimes very grotesque, but not always. For example, a shaman might cut open the afflicted part and spiders might come crawling out, after which the person might appear to improve. Second, after sufficient time has transpired to make an impression on people, the individual would often receive the same sickness again (or he has never truly been healed), or something worse in another part of the body would surface, or some tragedy would come upon the person, such as strange financial troubles, or a fatal accident. The Bible says, "The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it" (Proverbs 10:22). But Satan will not let anyone run off with a true blessing. In contrast, some people speak as if the blessing of God is a curse, and the curse of Satan is a gift from God.

The Bible says that Satan can appear as an angel of light. Rather than relying on the Scripture and the Spirit to discern — rather than using the ways God himself has established — cessationists would want visions to cease so that they can call all visions false. Some of them allow the possibility on paper, so that they would not appear to usurp God's sovereignty, but if one claims to have seen a vision, he is automatically prejudged and attacked. The standard doctrine of divine sovereignty is, "God may do whatever he wants, unless he does." Thus whether miracles are allowed or denied in principle, they are denied in practice, and then really, denied in principle also. They pretend to exalt the word of God — "preach the word, preach the word," they say — but they preach only parts of the word of God, and then even distorting those parts to shut out other parts, and they will attack those who preach all of it. They want people to think that they "preach the word," but the truth is that they only preach their creed, expressed by passages from the word of God. They will crucify Christ over and over again if they have to, but they will protect their "historic" faith!

However, they cannot escape from the fact Satan also preaches. Acts 16 tells us about a girl who had a demon. She followed Paul and his companions, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved" (v. 17). The words that she said were exactly correct. Elsewhere I have discussed how this could have hindered the gospel, but now our focus is on another issue. Someone could preach the same message that the apostles preached or promote the apostles as divine messengers, but he could be functioning by the power of the devil. If he is more obvious about his satanic influence, he could even preach a doctrine of cessationism. He could castigate the Pentecostals with full indignation. He could write a book to denounce charismatic chaos and defend the faith. It would all be very dignified, very precise, very demonic. And many who claim to be Christians would applaud him for it.

A cessationist theologian may say many things that sound right, but what spirit is driving him? If he truly believes the gospel, then why does he reject so much of it? Why does he draw people in with a few sound doctrines, only to slit their throats with unbelief? He may

be one of the most respected personalities in Christian circles, but is he God's gospel ambassador, or Satan's double agent? Do you follow him because he says some good things, because he is so faithful to historic orthodoxy, and because he strives against non-Christian immorality? But he is a cessationist. He refuses even the basics of the gospel, things that even a new convert should pick up on the first day. The girl in Acts 16 also said some good things. She also announced the apostolic faith. And then Paul cast the demon out of her!

In any case, what defense does the cessationist have against demonic preaching that is, well...true? Would he even notice? Can he see the spirit and cast it out in the name of Jesus? Even if he perceives something evil, can he cast out a demon? Such a thing is foreign to him. And what is there to cast out, when the preaching is true? Does he know? I admit that the comparison is not exact, because the cessationist is perhaps more like the girl with the demon than the apostle and his companions, but let us tolerate this for now. By rejecting the gifts of the Spirit, including the discerning of spirits, the cessationist disowns the thing that God has provided to judge something like this.

The cessationist thinks that he is not deceived, but he is already deceived, and the most deceived. The atheist also thinks that he escapes deception, but he is so deceived that Satan does not need to do anything more to him. Someone can place the truth before him, and he would reject it in the name of rationality, skepticism, and integrity, when this is just an excuse to avoid intellectual responsibility, to avoid thinking at all. The atheist does not escape deception, but he hides from the truth about God and about himself. He is an intellectual invalid. Likewise, the cessationist is already defeated. He is so deceived that he does not need to be deceived any further. Someone can place the gospel before him, and he would call it strange fire in the name of true religion, when this is just an excuse to avoid spiritual responsibility, to avoid believing at all. He is a spiritual invalid.

The Bible teaches that we defend ourselves by taking up the shield of faith, not the shield of doubt. Unbelief offers no protection, because unbelief is the thing that kills. It is the most fatal thing. Unbelief does not defeat lies, because it is the biggest lie. The way to escape deception is a complete embrace of the word of God by faith — throwing ourselves totally into all of the gospel. The cessationist tries to protect himself with unbelief, and this is why he is a failure. He says, "Even if there are no spiritual gifts, I will discern by the word of God." But how can he discern anything by the word of God, when he does not believe the word of God? Besides giving us doctrines and principles to judge spiritual things, the word of God teaches us about the gifts of the Spirit, including discerning of spirits and other relevant endowments. God's word prescribes these things, and the cessationist has rejected them, but he claims that he judges by God's word. How is he not deceived? We also judge spiritual things by the word of God, and even without the discerning of spirits, it is obvious that the cessationist preaches a different message than the one ordained by Jesus and the apostles.

How did God's true servants deal with miracles from evil spirits and false religions? With denial? With skepticism? Did they take up the shield of doubt to quench all the flaming arrows of the devil? Did they cry, "This is all fake. I don't believe it. I just don't believe it.

I will not be deceived"? No. They responded with faith in God and overwhelmed their opponents with miracle power. Moses told Aaron to throw down his staff before Pharaoh, and it became a snake. Pharaoh's magicians tried to match this. They threw down their staffs, and they became snakes. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs (Exodus 7:8-13). Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal. He said, "Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire — he is God" (1 Kings 18:23-24). The false prophets called on Baal, but nothing happened. Elijah prayed to God, and fire came down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice.

Philip went to Samaria and declared Jesus Christ to the people. The Bible says, "With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:7-8). There was a sorcerer named Simon in the city, who for a time had captured the people's attention. When the people turned to Jesus, Simon himself began to follow Philip everywhere, "astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw" (v. 13). This also happens when we preach the gospel. In one case, an experienced witch perhaps thirty years my elder tried to follow me around and submit to my ministry, astonished by the things that she saw. Forgoing the details, I had to turn her away just as Peter did with Simon (Acts 8:20-23). In any case, witches and sorcerers recognize the superior power, and they covet it. In other cases, we have found that evil spirits and powers cannot function in our presence. The name of Jesus is greater than witchcraft, and all the powers of Satan. This also addresses what we mentioned at the beginning. Even though Satan could appear to heal, we can dominate him in the name of Jesus and command him to cease, and then provide genuine miracles of healing and a message of salvation to the people.

Of course, a cessationist can also speak the name of Jesus, but it means something different coming from him. Jesus means something less to him. To me, Jesus is an ever-present person, an overpowering force, and his name sounds like miracles. Peter walked into a room and said, "Jesus Christ heals you," and a man who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years got up immediately. This is Jesus. But when the cessationist whimpers, "in the name of Jesus," if the demons pay attention at all, they would probably yawn, "Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:15). When Paul ran into a sorcerer who opposed him, he called down blindness on the fellow (Acts 13:6-12). When a cessationist encounters an evil spirit, he can only verbally deny and condemn. He will write articles about it. He will add it to his database and send out an alert on his mailing list, but Satan is not afraid of his mailing list. The man is powerless, but he offers himself up to evil powers to step on him and laugh at him.

33. Cessationism and Damnation

I See Miracles

You told me about cessationists who challenge you, saying, "How many healing miracles have you seen? How many prophecies have you seen?" We can answer that we have seen a number of them. We have not only seen miracles of healing and prophecy, but we have performed them by the power of God.

The first miracle of healing I witnessed was done by my own hands, the first time I preached. Before that day, I had read about the miracles in the Bible, and heard about the miracles experienced by other people, but I had never seen one. I believed the Bible's promise that God would work miracles through me in the name of Jesus, so I went ahead and did it.

I am aware that God condemns bearing false witness, and I insist that I am telling the truth about this.

I See Damnation

The challenge reveals an alarming reality in the cessationists. How can they believe in the miracles that the Bible records if they cannot believe in the miracles that the Bible promises? This applies not only to the miracles, but to everything in the Bible. If they cannot believe biblical promises without first seeing them happen, then they cannot believe biblical records without having seen them happen. The inevitable conclusion is that they cannot believe in Jesus Christ, or the gospel. Therefore, they cannot be saved. They will remain in their sins, and they will burn in hell.

The challenge is self-damning. It could be an indication that they have never accepted the gospel in the first place. They have been pretending all along. Even if they are not damned by their cessationism as such, their cessationism suggests that they have always been damned. If they refuse to back off from their cessationism, then neither will we back off from the logical conclusion that they are reprobates. If they do not repent and retreat, then there is no need to discuss cessationism further, because they are unsaved. They need to believe the gospel, or they will burn in hell.

"Are you telling me that cessationists are unsaved?" No. THEY are telling you that they are unsaved, and they are forcing you to agree with them. In fact, although the challenge draws attention to their unbelief, we must assert the same point against the cessationists who have not issued the challenge. If they cannot believe the biblical promises, then how can they believe the biblical records? They cannot. There is no way around this. Logically, they cannot accept one and reject the other. If they wish to take the Spirit from us, we will

take the Christ from them. If they want our miracles to cease, we will leave their souls to fry. This is the deal. This is what they are up against.

I See Contradiction

As you mentioned, you would receive such a challenge even from those who boast of the slogan "Scripture alone." Of course, they are liars. If they hold to Scripture alone, then they would not demand evidence from experience before they would believe a doctrine from Scripture. If Scripture teaches the doctrine, then they ought to believe it even if no one else does. If Scripture refutes the doctrine, then experience is irrelevant. But they still argue from experience. As Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Luke 11:29). It is ironic that cessationists have used this statement against the "charismatics." The charismatics do not seek miracles so that they will believe, but they already believe, and expect to see miracles because they believe. In contrast, the cessationists refuse to believe the word of God, but they demand signs from the charismatics before they will believe. Thus Jesus' rebuke applies to the cessationists, not to the charismatics. The cessationists are an evil generation, a wicked people. At the judgment, those who have had less access to the word of God but still believed in the gospel promises of miracles will stand up and condemn the cessationists (Luke 11:31-32).

The contradiction is even more glaring among the cessationists who claim to take Scripture as their first principle and deduce the rest of their worldview from it, rejecting things like sensation and intuition as sources of knowledge. Indeed, this is the only sound method of theology and philosophy, but they say one thing and do another. Their worldview is in reality a human system that imposes itself on Scripture and not a system that has been deduced from Scripture. They assume what is true or false, possible or impossible, from the start, apart from what Scripture really says. It is a personal philosophy that they use the Bible to sanction, that they hide under the Bible as if it came from the Bible. Given their claim about how their system is produced, this makes it one of the more hypocritical schools of thought compared to many others, even though many of its beliefs remain superior.

They often settle disputes by their creeds and theologians instead of Scripture. They make elaborate arguments from historic confessions and authorities, but fail to make their case from the Bible. Thus they damn themselves. If they truly deduce their beliefs from Scripture, then they would conclude that he who has faith can perform the same works and even greater works than those Jesus performed. If they truly deduce their beliefs from Scripture, then they would conclude that he who has the Spirit could receive visions, dreams, and prophecies, and could experience all kinds of signs and wonders. Even though the Bible teaches these things, they do not form these conclusions, because these things were rejected from the start when they approached Scripture with their philosophical method, entirely apart from what Scripture actually says. They claim to deduce truth from the Bible, but they have already decided what they could deduce from the Bible apart from what the Bible says. The truth is that they have no allegiance to Christ, but they wish to

exploit his credibility to advance their own philosophy. Whether they are strict about an exclusive appeal to Scripture, cessationists damn themselves when they claim to uphold Scripture, and especially when they also appeal to experience.

I See Degradation

I have seen God's promises in Scripture. If the cessationists consider the Scripture insufficient, but demand me to tell them what I have seen outside of Scripture, then I can tell them that I have also seen God fulfill these promises. I have seen miracles. I have ministered in healing and prophecy.

But I have seen other things as well. I have seen the cessationists. I have seen their unbelief, their arrogance, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness. I have seen their foolishness and incompetence, their spiritual corruption. I have seen people who need these things that God promises, but somehow remain smug that they do not have faith to receive them. I have seen the degrading existence that they live "before the face of God" — all they have are religious slogans.

I have seen the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it translates people from the authority of darkness to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. And I have also seen those who carry the banner of Christ, but who live without its power because of their unbelief. It is a most pathetic and deplorable sight. And then they question us? These are the same people who wish to lecture us on theology, who wish to teach us a thing or two about life. NO THANKS.

I See Jesus

What have I seen? I have seen Jesus Christ in Scripture, and even now this glorious vision is before me. I see the Jesus who promises miracles: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do the same things that I have been doing, and he will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12). I see the Jesus who performs miracles: "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13). The cessationists demand, "Scripture or no Scripture, let us see the miracles and we will believe." Some of them will indeed see them in our ministry. But Jesus answers, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). Indeed, we remind those who have experienced miracles that their trust and focus should always stay on the word of God, on the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is something that the cessationists have not learned, and that they refuse to do, to their own destruction.

I rejoice that we are free to follow the faith that Jesus Christ handed down to us. This is the gospel of same plus more, instead of the heresy of less or none. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. We do not need to start with Jesus and then finish with some hack

theologian. No one can hold our faith in bondage unless we allow it. Nevertheless, even though the cessationists are an evil generation, a wicked people, their unbelief reminds us of several important issues:

First, their unbelief reminds us that there is such a thing as a false profession of faith. A man can claim to believe all the right doctrines, until he comes to one that demands him to put action to this faith. He will beat his chest. He will boast about his historic orthodoxy. He will spit out slogans like "Scripture alone," "Christ alone," and "God is for all of life." But then Scripture teaches a doctrine that, on top of all the talking, demands him to believe for something to happen, something humanly impossible, something in public. And he shrinks back. Then he lashes out at people who talk about it and who carry it out. How can we avoid the conclusion that his faith is fake? Cessationism is the excuse to profess faith in God without needing to possess faith in God. If the cessationists want us to assume that they have faith, then they should at least hide their unbelief from us, rather than being smug and pushy about it.

Second, their unbelief reminds us that we must continue to be doers of the word of God, and not hearers only. We need to be doers of the word, not just debaters of the word. Jesus spent more time teaching and healing the people than he did debating the Pharisees about teaching and healing the people. Since the Bible promises us miracles, healing, and prophecy, then we should perform miracles, healing, and prophecy. The ministry of miracles is not an optional appendage to the gospel that we can forever debate about but never act upon. We should do what the Bible says, and receive what the Bible says. These miracles should actually happen. Many people are more interested in debating the truth and nitpicking the truth than believing and obeying the truth. We can take a small amount of time to deal with them, but we must never become like them. The pharisaical road is a dead end.

Third, their unbelief reminds us that we must push the biblical doctrine of miracle ministry much more, even with all the resources we possess. We have been too mild in our rhetoric and our effort against cessationism. We have not attacked and condemned the cessationists enough, and we have not been harsh enough toward them. Many of us are still not perceiving the evil and danger in this satanic heresy. We ought to amend church policy to address the issue — someone who actively spreads unbelief in the congregation should be excommunicated. We have not been aggressive enough in pursuing the miracle agenda of Jesus Christ. Even those who practice a ministry of healing often confine themselves to churches and meetings, where they could count on "an atmosphere of faith." Indeed, Jesus himself exercised a ministry of miracles that mostly benefited those who came to him in faith — it was not something he did just to prove himself — but he also performed in various situations. We can begin among those who have faith, but then the miracles should spill over to the streets, where they can be more visible and more widely reported.

34. The Throne-Power of God

Men could use their rationality to reason about God and converse with God, even to "argue" and "bargain" with God by faith. Examples include Abraham (Genesis 18:22-33), Jacob (Genesis 32:26-28), Moses (Exodus 32:11-14), Peter (Acts 10:9-16), and Paul (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). This is not a feature of the prophetic office. An ordinary disciple like Ananias could protest the risen Lord's instruction about Paul until the Lord explained himself (Acts 9:10-16). In fact, a heathen woman could seemingly contradict an explicit restriction on Jesus' mission to obtain what she wanted from him (Matthew 15:24-28). She did not have a covenant, but she had faith. This made her infinitely superior to those who claim to be Christians, and who boast about the emphasis on the covenant in their theology, but who live as those without a covenant — without benefits and without miracles.

They keep saying, "the covenant of the Lord, the covenant of the Lord, the covenant of the Lord," but they do not believe what this covenant promises (Jeremiah 7:4, 8:8). They attack the good news that Jesus proclaimed, a good news that came with spiritual and material benefits, healing, deliverance, prophecy, and all kinds of miracles (Matthew 6:33, Matthew 8:17, Matthew 11:5, Luke 4:18-19, John 14:12, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:17-18). Thus the covenant becomes a witness against them, because their theology confesses its existence, but perverts its substance and refuses its power. They are like those who suppress the knowledge of God in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), only that they are more guilty, since this knowledge is in explicit and detailed written form, and not only an innate intuition. Listen! If you have a "covenant theology" but do not believe what the covenant says, then you should shut up about the covenant. If you mention it, it will be counted against you. Among others, cessationists have no right to say the word (Jeremiah 23:33-38).

There is no hint that the angels can address God in the way that men can. If there is one who tried, that angel could only be Satan. Any angel who steps out of line is damned. There is no forgiveness or redemption. But for men, somehow they do not act out of place if they do something like this in faith and not in defiance (Psalm 8:4-5, see NLT or textual note on verse 5). In fact, it appears that God is rather pleased with such interaction when the men speak this way in faith. The angels are said to be servants, not only of God, but they are servants to the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). In contrast, men are never told to serve angels. Christians are said to be co-heirs of the God-Man himself (Romans 8:17), a place that no angel would dare hope to share. We are not even sub-heirs, but co-heirs — heirs on the same level with Christ.

To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand" (Hebrews 1:13)? But Christians are seated together with Christ at the right hand of God (Ephesians 2:6). If all things are under his feet, then all things are under our feet (Ephesians 1:22). We have the authority of Christ right now in this world. The ones who boast of their "covenant theology" and "historic orthodoxy" do not teach this. I have noticed that "covenant" theologians and believers know the least about the covenant. They replace the real thing with their complicated and technical studies, but heirs of the covenant should enjoy the benefits of the covenant (Luke 13:16). If they are true experts of the covenant, they would demonstrate

the throne-power of God. But they do not live out a fraction of its power, or any of its power, and they attack those who enter into it by faith. They use scholarship as subterfuge. They do not teach the covenant. They do not even preach the gospel.

35. "Everyone must start somewhere."

Jesus said that those who have faith in him should do the same works that he did, and even greater works. If you say the same thing, then your doctrine is consistent with the gospel. This doctrine from Jesus is just as authoritative as the doctrine of the atonement or the sovereign grace of God. If you choose some things to believe from the gospel and reject other things from the gospel, then you do not in fact believe the gospel, but you believe in yourself. Those who make excuses and attempt to change what Jesus said are those who reject Jesus Christ and reject the gospel. But if you say the same thing that Jesus said, then you cannot be wrong.

Everyone must start somewhere. So start. Do what the Bible says. You can start with anything that the Bible says about the miraculous as opportunity comes, but I recommend starting with the ministry of healing. Pray for the sick. Your first concern is whether you are doing what God says, and not whether miracles are happening. You should keep doing what God says regardless of the outcome. Yes, you should indeed get results — people should receive miraculous healing. But if you do not even start, then it is useless to worry about results.

From: email

36. "May the Spirit of God haunt your conscience."

I have given you the word of God on the ministry of healing, prophecy, and miracles. You either believe it and do it, or you do not. I will help a sincere person become a doer of the word of God, but I will not be dragged into a prolonged conversation with someone who is not sincere. You are trying to go back and forth with me to find an excuse for yourself or to help you argue with someone else. You want to keep me talking, so you would not have to believe and obey what God says. I refuse to be your excuse. If you are indeed sincere, good! Go! Do what the Bible says. Preach the gospel. Heal the sick. Cast out demons. Do your part to condemn and humiliate the cessationists.

If you have any argument, your argument is with God. The word of God says what it says. You cannot change it. I cannot change it. Even if you win an argument with someone (I say "someone" because you cannot win against me), and even if you find some excuse for yourself, the word of God is still there. I have stated the word of God in my writings, and offered instructions on how to do what it says. So decide for yourself. Whatever you decide, you will have to deal with God. I will not fall into a trap and allow you any excuse to reject the gospel or to disobey it, or to cause a delay.

If you wish to argue, I will always win. But so what? You will still refuse what God says. So I will give you the word of God and a few arguments as a testimony against you, and then I will shake the dust off my feet and leave you to rot. You have already made up your mind to reject the gospel. I have answered you once, twice, or several times, but you are trying to use me as a delay tactic. You put me between God and yourself, so you will not have to face God directly. But I am taking this from you. I am exposing you. I have done my part, and I wipe your nasty blood from my hands. Now I remove myself, and you must face God.

May the Spirit of God haunt your conscience until you either repent of your unbelief and become a doer of the word, or harden your heart even more, to your own destruction. Believe and live, or harden your heart, and burn in hell.

From: email

37. Cessationism: A Different Gospel

Jesus said that mere servants do not know their master's business (John 15:15). God does not treat us as mere slaves, but he teaches us his plan and offers us his power (John 15:15). This is the gospel, the good news that God would treat men with such regard through Jesus Christ. It is as much gospel as any other thing that we call gospel.

He makes us his co-heirs and co-workers (Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 6:1) in his program of expansionism through truth (John 16:13), love (John 15:17), and power (John 14:12). These are the recurring themes that define the gospel agenda in the extended discourse of John 14-16. They are the three pillars of the gospel.

The power refers to the miracle power that enabled Jesus to do "what no one else did" (John 15:24). This same power would enable anyone who has faith in him to perform the same works and even greater works (John 14:12). Power co-exists with truth and love. If one rejects the power, then he also rejects the truth, because it is the truth that teaches him about the power. If one rejects the power, then he also rejects the love, because this is a love that reaches out with the power.

Therefore, anyone who rejects the same-and-greater works doctrine is a Christ-hater and gospel-denier. The cessationist comes under this condemnation. He preaches a different Christ than the one recorded in Scripture, and a different gospel than the one delivered by the apostles. He is not God's friend. He is not even a good slave, because he opposes his master's program. He is worse than worthless.

38. Cessationism: The Alien Religion

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-20)

You asked me how I would answer someone who uses Ephesians 2:20 to support cessationism. It is possible to do it in half a sentence, but sometimes I refute an opponent so fast that he fails to notice. The debate would be over, but he is still standing there, beating his chest and smiling like a moron, waiting for an answer. The faith of Jesus Christ is clear and perfect. One will always win if he holds fast to the gospel in its simple brilliance. Evil men complicate matters because of their unbelief and pride. Let us, therefore, make a bigger issue out of this foolishness than is necessary.

For the sake of convenience, we will say "apostles" from now on instead of the full expression in Ephesians 2:20. Putting aside cessationism for a moment, the text is often used to say that the foundation of the apostles must be the only source and measure of our doctrines. Our doctrines must come from this foundation and must agree with this foundation. This is correct, and I freely make this application in my expositions. It follows from the biblical account of the work of these men. The apostles received revelations that they established as official doctrines of Jesus Christ. Within the context of our verse, Paul writes that "the mystery of Christ...has now been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:4-5).

Nevertheless, although this is a legitimate inference from the text, it is not what the text directly says, and it is as far as we can take it in this direction. When it is used to demand doctrinal agreement with the apostles, it is acceptable, because this application is within the scope of its meaning, so that there is no need to enforce the exact intention of the text each time. However, when it is construed to support cessationism, then it is a false inference and application, and the text has been turned against itself. When that happens, we must return to what the text actually says.

Paul refers to Christ as a person. The cornerstone is not the teachings of Christ, but Christ himself. And Paul refers to the apostles as people. The foundation is not the teachings of the apostles, but the apostles themselves. There is no special focus on their sermons, writings, or revelations. There is no mention of Scripture. The topic is not the theology of God, but the people of God, or the "household" of God (v. 19). Upon this foundation of individuals — not doctrines and revelations, but people — other individuals are included. These people combine to form a building, or the temple of God: "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (2:21-22). The reference to the apostles as "foundation" appears as part of this metaphor. Thus the foundation does not refer to the revelational foundation of an intellectual system, but the personal foundation of a spiritual community.

Peter uses a similar metaphor when he writes, "As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5). He also conceives of individual believers — the people, not ideas, or doctrines, or revelations — as building blocks of God's "spiritual house." He also calls Christ the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6). And he uses the metaphor for the same purpose that Paul uses it, that is, to describe how the Gentiles are included in Christ and joined together into one spiritual house (1 Peter 2:9-10, Ephesians 3:6). This is sufficient to neutralize the cessationist argument, because Paul is not even talking about the topic in Ephesians 2:20. Just as Paul is not talking about what revelations we possess, he is not talking about what revelations the apostles possessed. He is talking about believers as people joined together into a building, and apostles as people joined together into a foundation.

The metaphor depicts a building being added to a foundation. It does not say that the construction is finished with only the cornerstone. It does not say that the construction is finished with only the foundation. Rather, the point of the passage is that God intends to add materials to the existing foundation in order to complete a whole building that rises up to become a temple. The foundation of a building is not the only part of the building, but the place where the rest of the building is constructed.

The cessationist argument is that the apostolic revelation is the foundation, and we cannot add to the foundation, so that there cannot be any more prophetic operations. Although we do not modify or increase the foundation itself, we indeed add to it and build upon it, and the material for the building is not fundamentally different from the material for the foundation. You do not add cupcakes on a cement foundation. You add cement to cement, or some other building materials. Thus if we say that the foundation consists of revelations, even those that become Scripture, then the metaphor could mean that believers can add to Scripture, and the only restriction would be that the additions must agree with the revelations that have already been recorded. This is the exact conclusion that the cessationists claim they wish to avoid, but their interpretation of the verse is the very thing that allows this conclusion.

If the claim is that to build on the revelations of the apostles refer to preaching that agrees with them, then it is asserted by force, because the text does not say this. Moreover, if the text means that their preaching is the foundation of my preaching, then I can also say that their ministry of miracles and prophecies is the foundation of my ministry of miracles and prophecies. As long as a ministry of miracles and prophecies is patterned after the ministry of the apostles, it would be as legitimate as a ministry of preaching that is patterned after the ministry of the apostles. Try other combinations of how we interpret the foundation and the building. None can fit into the cessationist view.

Jesus Christ was the cornerstone that established the possibility and legitimacy of the apostolic ministry of preaching, healing, and prophecy. In fact, the cornerstone guaranteed the foundation. He expanded his ministry from himself to these other men. Then, the

apostles formed the foundation that extended and established the possibility and legitimacy of the Christian ministry of preaching, healing, and prophecy. They expanded their ministry from themselves to all other believers and all future generations. If the text is applied to the topic at all, it endorses my doctrine of expansionism. We could say that the apostles established a foundation that guarantees a wider and stronger ministry of miracles and prophecies. They established only a foundation, but believers will build on it and reach for more!

Therefore, if we accept the cessationist interpretation of the "foundation," the only conclusion is the exponential multiplication of all things miraculous, including the operations of healing, prophecy, visions and dreams, and various signs and wonders. The metaphor would denote a dramatic increase of miracles and prophecies, and not a cessation of anything that the apostles did. In fact, it would guarantee that we could perform miracles and prophecies that are more powerful and more numerous (John 14:12). With so many believers in the world today, the church should be producing a million times more miracles and prophecies than the early church, even a hundred million times more. The only restriction is that these operations must agree with the doctrines and patterns established by the apostles.

The apostles formed the foundation. The cessationists wish it to refer to revelations. Fine. What does the foundation say? It teaches us to have faith to perform miracles. It commands us to desire to produce prophecies. It expects us to receive visions and dreams, and various signs and wonders. On this foundation is added God's people. Now if there are people who refuse what the foundation teaches, commands, and expects, then the only conclusion is that they do not belong to this foundation. If they are joined together into a building, it must mean that they are putting themselves on a different foundation than the one established by the apostles.

Therefore, if the Christian foundation is what the cessationists say it is, then the cessationists cannot be saved. They cannot be "fellow citizens" of God's household with the apostles, but they must be "foreigners and aliens," building on a different foundation. They build upon an alien religion. They remain outside of our structure. They are not Christians. It is strange that although cessationists claim superior scholarship, they constantly paint themselves into a corner in which there is no salvation for them. They force us to watch them cut their own throats. This kind of religion is grotesque and degrading. It is the depravity of unbelief and tradition. It is as if they are determined to take the path of self-damnation. It is as if they wish to burn in hell.

From: email

39. Cessationism: So Great Damnation

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Hebrews 2:2-4)

If the passage means the cessation of miracles (v. 4), it would also mean the cessation of speech (v. 3). Since the cessationist uses the text to stop miracles in general, not only miracles that are interpreted as authentication (v. 4), the text would also stop all speaking, about anything at all, not only speaking that is interpreted as preaching the gospel (v. 3). If the cessationist can order food in a restaurant, if the cessationist can pray to God, if the cessationist can confess Jesus Christ for salvation, and if the cessationist can tell you about cessationism, he has exposed himself as utterly stupid by using this passage to prove cessationism.

Jesus promised that anyone who has faith can work miracles, including something like commanding a tree to die and a mountain to move (Matthew 21:21). He also promised that anyone who has faith in him can do the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles than he did (John 14:12). In addition to this, he promised that those who have faith would receive the same miracle power that he possessed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8).

This is included in what was "first announced by the Lord" (Hebrews 2:3). Then his early followers preached the same thing (Acts 2:39) and demonstrated what he promised (Acts 3:16). This is included in what was "confirmed to us by those who heard him" (Hebrews 2:3). In fact, God himself testified to the message of Jesus by signs and wonders (Hebrews 2:4) — the message that includes the command and promise for those who have faith to receive and perform miracles in his name. Thus Jesus announced that we will have miracles. His apostles confirmed that we will have miracles. And God testified that we will have miracles. The context, the content, and the grammar of the passage point to the fact that this message has been finalized. It cannot be altered. It cannot be rescinded. Christians will always be able to receive and perform miracles by faith.

Now, answer me, how can anyone excuse himself who preaches against this, and who says that Christians cannot perform miracles by faith, and that miracles have ceased? This person has no excuse. And, answer me, how can anyone escape who teaches the opposite of this message that was announced by Christ, confirmed by the apostles, and testified to by God himself? This person has no escape. If someone who violated "the message spoken by angels" (v. 2) was stoned to death and sent to hell, what should we do to the cessationist? This fellow defies the message of the Lord of Angels, and refuses to comply with his promises about faith and miracles. What will God do to the cessationist? This fellow declares that the gospel of Christ has ceased, and his promises are no longer true. How can

the cessationist escape, if he condemns such great salvation (v. 3)? And what will happen to the person who shows any respect to a cessationist theologian or preacher (Romans 1:32)?

If the cessationist uses this passage to prove cessationism (v. 4), then the only conclusion is that he cannot preach the gospel (v. 3), which means that he is disobedient to the gospel commission. He has no authority to teach us anything, or to speak up in Christian discussions. He has to SHUT UP! But even worse, it also means that he cannot use verbal thoughts, sign language, or audible speech to confess Jesus as Lord, and therefore, like many other cases where the cessationist tries to use Scripture to prove cessationism, it backfires and results in the conclusion that he cannot be saved, and he will BURN IN HELL.

40. Cessationism: Worse than Nazareth

The most natural, reliable, and permanent way for a person to receive healing is to teach him the word of God, so that he can have faith and receive healing for himself. He can decide to receive healing without another person's prayer, or on the occasion of another person's prayer, such as with the laying on of hands. Most of the healing miracles Jesus performed occurred when the sick people came to Jesus, and not when he went out of his way to prove something. There is no record of someone who came to Jesus in faith and failed to receive. Everyone who asked in faith was healed. On the other hand, the Bible says that when there was unbelief, Jesus did not do many miracles (Matthew 13:58, Mark 6:5-6). If the main purpose of miracles was to prove himself, then he should have done more miracles when there was unbelief. But the opposite happened. God performs most miracles in response to faith, not in response to desperation or skepticism.

When Jesus himself initiated the healing, sometimes only one person out of a large crowd received, as when he healed the invalid at Bethesda (John 5:1-15). Think about it: even after the invalid was healed, the Bible does not say that the rest of the sick people swarmed Jesus to receive healing from him. He was able to slip away from the crowd (v. 13). Why? They were waiting for the pool to heal them! Now both Christians and non-Christians look to medicine. I do not condemn people for using medicine, because I condemn them for not looking to God in faith, and this is such a terminal condemnation that I would not need to condemn them for anything else. When we are attacked for teaching the biblical doctrine of healing, we have the duty to forcefully counter that the fault is not in the gospel or in us, but in the critics who seek to excuse themselves. For each criticism, we can easily answer the argument and cause it to backfire a hundredfold. For every attack on our orthodoxy, we have multiple angles from which to challenge their very salvation. They complain that we are severe, but they have no knowledge of the kind of restraint that we have already exercised.

Although we have answered it before, the above addresses the foolish argument that if Christians can perform healing today, then we should be able to empty out entire hospitals. Some would attempt to explain why we are unable to do this, but even if there is some truth to what they say, it is a misleading reply. I will offer the critics no satisfaction. YES, I CAN DO IT. I guarantee that I can do it — under the same conditions as those illustrated in the Bible, or the same conditions that applied to Jesus. If I can receive complete authority over each person in a hospital and teach him the word of God for as long as I want, then each one who accepts what I say and who has faith to receive for himself will be healed. If I can convince him to have faith in Jesus, then he will receive from Jesus. I will then not credit my gift or ministry, but I will credit the person's faith, as Jesus did. This was how it worked then, and this is how it works now. I have been in smaller settings in which all of the people were healed, even while some doubted, but when most believed. Several times I was left standing there confused, because I did not realize that there were no more sick people. Otherwise, the situation might be like Bethesda and Nazareth. That is, some people will still be healed, but not every one.

Would every one of them believe the word of God on healing? Apparently not, or there would be no opposition to the doctrine, and we would not need to discuss this. There are those who cling to cessationism regardless of the gospel, and there are those who hate Jesus regardless of what you say. On this issue, the church is now worse than Bethesda and Nazareth. Most of the people at that time at least had a supernatural worldview. "Christians" today often believe in the supernatural only on paper, or in history. Thus even if we can capture their attention for a while, it might take more time and effort to teach them. It will demand more skill on our end to plant the seed of faith and to water and protect it as it grows. However, I believe that the Spirit of God can do a mighty work, and in some people uproot unbelief in a moment.

Still, a number of them might receive healing by the gifts of the Spirit without their own faith. This is a different spiritual operation, and as mentioned, not every person will be healed this way, not even in the ministry of Jesus. In any case, a hospital would not allow a preacher complete access to its patients, with unlimited time to speak to each person and pray for each person. And it would not allow a preacher to repeatedly gather all its patients in large gatherings to preach to them and pray for them. So the challenge is useless, except to expose the fact that the critics are ignorant of spiritual operations (1 Corinthians 12:1). They err because they do not know the Scriptures or the power of God (Matthew 22:29). They cannot engage in intelligent discussions or make relevant objections.

From: email

41. "When another person can take authority..."

Although the best and the most natural way for a person to receive healing is by his own faith, there are times when another person can take authority over the situation, at least a few times, or temporarily, and in some relationships, consistently, on behalf of someone who lacks faith or knowledge, or who is unconscious, or who is in covenant with him. For example, a parent can exercise authority over a child's condition by faith in the name of Jesus. A parent can receive healing for the child and demand sickness to leave the child. Also, I can exercise authority over my wife's body, because we are one flesh by covenant, and her body does not only belong to her, and vice versa (1 Corinthians 7:4). There are too many scenarios and variables to discuss in detail. Note that I am speaking of healing by faith in the word of God, not the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, which belongs to a separate category.

In one example I heard, two pastors were traveling together to a ministerial convention. One of them had diabetes and had to measure his sugar levels regularly, to determine whether he needed medication. The other preacher was strong in healing and wanted the occasion to teach him something about this, so he said, "As long as you are with me, you will never register high sugar levels." This preacher said this only once, and he never prayed about it. Jesus said we can have what we say by faith (Mark 11:14, 23). They were together for a number of days, and the man ate all kinds of food but never needed insulin. He said he had never gone so long without needing it. Several days after they parted, the man started to register high sugar levels again. He eventually learned and received healing for himself.

If a person is unconscious or possessed with demons, I can probably command him in the name of Jesus to come to his right mind temporarily, so that I can talk to him. But he will return to his usual condition if he rejects what I say or if he wishes to stay sick or possessed. Do not assume that everyone wants what Jesus has for him (John 5:6). Many people do not want to be delivered, because their condition gives them their identity, or they are proud of their sickness, or they think that they are heroic for suffering it, or that it is a gift from God, or something like this. If he is a cessationist, he might think that healing is not supposed to happen, or he might even prefer to remain sick than to be proven wrong.

If a person wishes to keep a sickness or a demon, he can keep it. In a case like this, we should usually not pray for him right away, but it would be better to spend a significant amount of time speaking to the person first and talk him out of the deception by the word of God. Otherwise, it would be better to leave him in the current condition. As long as he thinks like this, even if you are able to force the sickness or demon to leave, and this is indeed possible, it might return in a stronger form and he would become worse than before (Matthew 12:45).

From: email

42. "Faith comes by the word of God..."

The Bible says that faith comes by the word of God (Romans 10:17), and not so much by prayer. When the disciples petitioned Jesus and said, "Increase our faith," Jesus did not pray for them to receive more faith or impart more faith to them by some other operation, but he taught them about faith instead. He said that if they had faith as small as a seed, they could command a tree to be uprooted and be planted in the sea, and it would obey them (Luke 17:6).

By the way, this is both difficult and unnatural. It is difficult because of the extensive root system of this kind of tree, and it is unnatural because the command calls for it to be planted in the sea. Jesus was the most extreme teacher of faith, much more extreme than any teacher today who has been called a heretic. His promise went far beyond the restoration of natural order, such as the healing of a body. He promised a fantastic, unnecessary, and outright freakish miracle, and he promised it to "small" faith.

James said that we should not only say to someone, "Be warm and filled," when we can give that person something. Likewise, we should not pray for someone to have faith when the Bible says that faith comes from the word of God, and we have the word of God. Give that person the word of God. Teach him. You can pray that he will have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to grow in the knowledge of God and to grasp the blessing of redemption (Ephesians 1:17). Then he will increase in faith.

It seems absurd for a person to pray for himself to increase in faith, because the Bible says that if you do not have faith, do not expect to receive anything from God (James 1:6-7). So on what basis would you receive faith this way, if you need faith in the first place? That said, I would not nitpick too much about this. I would not forbid someone to pray for faith if he understands that this would only be an indirect way of praying for things that actually produce faith, such as knowledge of the word of God. But then why would the person do it? Why not pray in line with what the Bible says about how faith comes? Yet I will not condemn him for this. My main concern is to call attention to the fact that the Bible itself says that faith comes from the word of God, and not just by asking for it. When a person prays for faith, he tends to neglect this fact.

Faith is confidence in what God has said. It involves conscious agreement. To increase in faith, learn the word of God, and think about it day and night. Speak it to yourself, over and over again. Then put action to it and do what it says. God's word must totally replace what you think. It must become what you think. It must become your identity. It must become YOU. Your beliefs and opinions must become the same as what God says. When someone asks you what God says about healing and what you think about healing, he should receive the same answer from you. What does faith say? "The word of God is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart" (Romans 10:8).

You can appear entirely sound in doctrine, but as long as it is only God's opinion, and as long as you refer to it with nothing more than reverent detachment, you will not partake of

its promises. It would all be the gospel — for someone else. You can appear totally right just by repeating what God says, but as long as it is only what he thinks and not what you think, then it only means that God is right, and not that you are right. God gave Abraham his name. After that, Abraham did not keep saying, "God says I am Abraham," but "I am Abraham." And he was. God called him a father of nations, and so he considered himself a father of nations, and introduced himself as a father of nations.

Related to this topic is that people tend to pray too soon, and too much, but neglect the word of God. It is often more effective to give someone the word of God on healing than to immediately pray for him to receive healing. Prayer has become a religious reaction, even a spiritual excuse. People just pray, pray, pray, pray, and nothing happens, and then they blame it on the "will of God." If this is what they do, it is better not to pray, but first look to the word of God.

In fact, many people receive healing without prayer when they learn that God says that they can be healed, that healing belongs to them, that sickness is satanic oppression, and that Jesus took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. But very few people receive healing by just praying, and praying, and praying, all the while believing that it is still up to some unknown "will of God" regardless of what the Bible says. If you want to know the will of God, look to the word of God, and not to your condition or outcome. Walk by faith, not by sight.

As for James 5:14-16, the passage instructs the sick person to request healing. Keep in mind that even those who had the least faith in those days likely still had much more faith than people nowadays. They had a supernatural worldview that modern Christians reject. To confine the biblical worldview to the pages of the book is also to reject it, because the book itself asserts that it is for all of reality and history. Thus a person who requested healing at that time likely had much more faith than many of those who request healing today. Therefore, we must put teaching first, and not prayer, which is not prayer at all when it is done without faith. Pray when you are ready. Pray when you have faith.

In some circles, James 5 is considered instructions for baby Christians, because any Christian who knows his rights in Christ should not need someone else to pray for his healing. I would not belittle someone who requests healing on the basis of this passage, and a Christian might need assistance if he suddenly deteriorates. We are here for one another, and he should not hesitate to ask for help. But I understand the point, and it is not wrong. James 5 is only one way to receive healing. What will the person do if he is at a place where elders are not available? Redemption is not bound to locations. God is not only the God of the hills or the valleys, but of all creation. And what if all the elders reject what the Bible says on healing, as is very likely the case today? Who are the elders themselves supposed to call when they need healing? What if I have faith to receive directly from God right now? Why should I need to wait?

Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. A person can read God's promise and receive salvation by himself, and when he sins afterward he should not need a preacher to guide him through every prayer for forgiveness. In the same way, a person can also read

God's promise and receive healing by himself. Calling for help is an option, not a requirement. I have never requested prayer for healing. I would do it if I ever need to, but I have never needed it. I have always received by my own faith. For me, it is much easier and faster, and I would not need to endure people whose idea of ministry is to gossip, patronize, and pontificate, but who cannot pray with an ounce of faith. A Christian should eventually grow in the word of God enough so that he could help the elders pray for the sick instead of needing the elders to pray for him.

From: email

43. "Always use your own judgment..."

You should not always believe a person's description of her situation. Whether in healing the sick, casting out demons, or counseling in general, the person who asks for ministry might err in her perception or interpretation of her circumstances, or she might be outright lying about it. Moreover, even when there is a real issue — a need for healing, or counseling, or whatever — sometimes the actual target might not be the victim, but the target is you. Most people who come are at least somewhat sincere, even if not completely accurate about their situation, but deception happens often enough that we need to watch out for it.

For example, a woman who claims to be harassed by demons and who appears fearful might or might not in fact have this problem. Whether or not she has it, Satan's real intention might be to use her to seduce you into adultery, or some other sin or mistake, or to create an occasion to slander you and launch a scandal. The endgame might not be to finish her, but to finish you. She would only be collateral damage. Sometimes there is a genuine need, but the person never intends to listen anyway. She is there just to waste your time. Perhaps you can waste your time on several people, even if they prove to disappoint. But if you get ten of these a day, or a week, then they have derailed your own agenda.

You must remain focused on what you are supposed to accomplish. Do not be so eager for ministry that you become stupid. Be zealous for righteousness and intelligence. Beware of manipulation. Pay attention to the person's claims and requests, and show compassion, but then always use your own judgment. Again, the person might be honest, but inaccurate. You need to find out the truth. Since the danger exists, unless it seems proper to proceed to other things, it is always good to begin by teaching the person from the word of God. A person who claims to be sick or oppressed only to get attention tends to become deflated if you teach her what the Bible says and tell her to have faith to receive from God for herself. Even a person with a genuine need requires teaching anyway, more than your prayer and other forms of ministry. So you can never go wrong with teaching.

From: email

44. "The spiritual whiplash multiplies the effect..."

Very often a "Christian" would pretend to ask you a question, but his only interest is in arguing with you in order to vindicate himself. Each person might have his own psychological issue, but whatever it is, he hopes to derive some satisfaction from such a transaction. He has no intention to listen to you or to accept what God says. He has made up his mind to affirm his redacted gospel no matter what. I would often move along quickly from someone like this, but if I address him I sometimes cut deep. I would expose him, sometimes to witnesses, but always to himself (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

He wishes to refute the Lord using me as the proxy. He wishes to make me the clown. He wants entertainment, or an endless debate, or victory in order to obtain assurance, or some such thing. I often avoid conflict, but once I begin I would stab him in the heart over and over again. This would often produce permanent psychological trauma that only rebirth can repair. Since this is the opposite of what he expects, the spiritual whiplash multiplies the effect even more. This is sometimes the proper way to respond. We see that Jesus did it, and the prophets and apostles did it. Someone like Stephen also did it. If you manage to achieve this, you might so devastate the person's psyche that he becomes intensely resentful, and he would continue to push forward against you to rescue his own identity. He might become obsessed with you and attack you in public. He might spend more time on you than even you think you are worth! He wants to kill you, but it is really to save himself.

He craves your attention, because every time you react it gives him hope that he can return to the beginning and obtain a different outcome. He wants to keep talking until he wins. Yet when you respond, you cut him again and again. He tells himself that he has won, but he knows that this is false, and so he keeps coming after you. If he tries to forget you, the Spirit of God still haunts him. He goes insane and lashes out once more. His repulsion against the truth has so warped him that hating you has become his new identity. Now he needs you. You have forgotten about him, but now even your silence continues to hurt him deep inside. He is butchered alive from within. The word of God will not leave him alone. So he hardens his heart, and he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, even though God has made the truth plain to him. Therefore God gives him over to a depraved mind, so that he becomes worse and worse. To drown the noise, he bans together with others who also ought to know the truth, but nevertheless persist in error and approve of his unbelief.

Prolonged struggle produces no profit. Since this person is lost to his error and obstinacy even before he talks to you, only that you have exposed his condition and aggravated his wickedness, and since the one who is occupied in serious ministry is much more valuable than someone like this, if you engage him too much you would be the one who suffers the greater loss. Sometimes it is right to do it, and the man would repent or it would serve the gospel in some way, but often it is bad business. There is a significant overhead, and you get nothing out of it. See through the deception and cut him off (Matthew 7:6).

45. The Physician, the Publican, and the Prostitute

I have addressed the abuse of Colossians 4:14 elsewhere, but I will say it again. Paul referred to Luke as "the physician." This is construed as an endorsement of medical science. However, everyone had an identity or profession before his involvement in ministry. Peter was a fisherman who became an apostle, but this does not tell us anything about his profession as a fisherman. Even if a person begins ministry as a baby, he still has a background. We could call him "Josh, the Baby" or "The Baby Preacher." The name might stick with him for the rest of his life, but that does not mean he would still be a baby after fifty years. Imagine having to explain something like this to a bunch of theological professors. Welcome to my world.

Matthew was a publican who became an apostle, but his profession was openly despised. Since tax collectors were often dishonest and oppressive, even the Bible identifies them with sinners (Matthew 18:17). But in the list of the twelve apostles, he is still called "Matthew the tax collector" (Matthew 10:3). Then, Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 refer to "Rahab the prostitute" even in the context of commending her faith. As for Paul, he was a Pharisee who persecuted and murdered Christians, and who then became an apostle. Sometimes he still called himself a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). All of this does not suggest that the Bible endorses fraud and extortion, prostitution, murder, and such things. Therefore, the mere fact that Luke was a physician does not contribute to our discussion. It is possible that Paul mentioned Luke's profession only as a way to identify him. In the Bible, we are not told whether he continued to practice medicine — his accomplishments are never associated with his profession as a doctor, and he recorded only miracles of healing.

Luke himself wrote, "And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone" (Luke 8:43, ESV). He said, "She could not be healed by anyone," suggesting that it is often futile to seek help from doctors like himself. Mark was even more emphatic. He wrote, "She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse" (Mark 5:26). If we are supposed to derive an endorsement for the entire medical field based on a reference to someone's background or vocation, what are we supposed to conclude from a verse like this? Think of other verses that people have used to endorse medicine. None of them can compete with a verse like this. Some doctrines in your historic creeds have less explicit biblical basis than this!

Why don't Christian scholars give texts like these their proper place when they talk about medicine? Why don't they squeeze every bit of juice from verses like these? The inference from Colossians 4:14 is utter lunacy. Several other verses in the Bible have been used in a similar fashion, but the same stupid scholars who make these inferences would not have tolerated such abuse on other topics. They are attempts to force the Bible to approve of their unbelief and lifestyle. Rahab received more definite and extensive praise than Luke, so does this mean that it is better to be a prostitute than a physician? But ladies and gentleman, this is Christian scholarship. These are the people who write books to defend the creeds, teach you doctrines, and admonish you on how to interpret the Bible! No

eisegesis, they say! As Paul said, "You then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?" (Romans 2:21). Worthless religious hypocrites. By the way, Luke's Gospel is the only one that includes the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself!" (Luke 4:23). Can I make a big deal out of this too? Of course I can...but I won't.

Let me state my position on medicine again in order to prevent misrepresentation. I do not condemn medicine. However, I am against the claim that the Bible endorses it, because I see no such support in the Bible, and every attempt that I came across has been fraudulent. The Bible seems to allow medicine, but nothing in it amounts to an endorsement. Moreover, the Bible undeniably presents healing from God by faith at the minimum as the first choice and the best option. This is a nonnegotiable gospel doctrine. I have elaborated on these points in other places.

That said, I think there is an important place for doctors in this world. Doctors can attempt to save those who are being harmed and even killed by cessationists and traditionalists. Regular people commit murder from the outside with guns and knives, but cessationists and traditionalists are much worse in that they commit murder from the inside by injecting unbelief into people. They kill their victims by corrupting their souls and deadening their spirits. This poisons their bodies from the inside, starting a process of decay and allowing external forces to finish them off. Who will save these people but doctors? Even non-Christian evolutionist doctors realize that sickness is a curse and an enemy, and they have to counteract the effects of "Christian" religionists who teach people that sickness is a gift from God.

Nevertheless, the gospel is the true solution, and we are scrambling to save these victims of unbelief and tradition. Doctors can attempt to keep them alive until we reach them and convince them with the gospel. Christians have been so unfaithful to preach the gospel — the gospel of both spiritual and physical health, the only gospel in the Bible — so that even with our modern technologies, the news that God heals our bodies has not yet reached so many people. In fact, this gospel — the only gospel — has still not reached most "Christians." Thus those of us who actually believe the gospel — again, there is no gospel that does not heal the body — must work harder to reach the masses, both "Christians" and non-Christians, with the news that Jesus Christ is the same, and that he heals and performs miracles.

Christian preachers must operate with certainty, because they preach a message that is true and final. Preachers know the absolute truth. In contrast, Christian doctors must operate with UNCERTAINTY, because they practice a field that lacks truth and stability. Their work is a desperate feeling in the dark, attempting to address the effects that sin has wrought in the body, while false doctrines from self-righteous "Christians" intensify these damages. From this perspective, doctors deserve our respect. They are saving stupid Christians from suicide by unbelief and heresy. We are getting the gospel to people as fast as we can, and doctors can buy us some time, to keep some people from suffering and perishing before we reach them.

Critics might assume that we are against medicine because we teach what the Bible says on healing. But no, I am grateful to the doctors for partnering with us, even unknowingly, as we combat the satanic religion of sickness that dominates the church today. In fact, I am grateful to God that when Christians are harming and killing themselves with false doctrine, he would use even the unbelievers to hold off disease and death against the cessationists and traditionalists, and those who pervert the sovereignty of God and other doctrines. There is no common grace, since reprobates are preserved by divine wrath to reach the full measure of sin and to increase their condemnation, but the chosen ones are preserved by grace to receive the gospel.

Nevertheless, a doctor who claims to be a Christian but who does not practice miracle healing denies his own faith. A Christian is qualified to be a medical doctor only if he puts ahead of his own vocation God, faith, and miracle healing. Also, he must realize that he has been made the embodiment of an excuse for unbelief, rebellion, and idol worship. "Christians" see him as a substitute for God and for faith in the gospel. Thus he must also be a teacher of healing, and rebuke those who come to him in unbelief and doctrines made by men. He must teach that sickness is not a gift from God, but as the Bible declares, a demonic attack and oppression, a chain and a curse. He must teach that Jesus Christ bore the curse and took away its power.

One preacher talked about a doctor who became a Christian and learned about God's promise of healing. He continued to practice medicine, but he would first tell his patients about the gospel, and offer to pray for their healing. He would say, "I can pray for you, and God can heal you and this visit will be free of charge. On the other hand, I will prescribe medicine if you wish, but I will have to charge you money because this is how I make my living." What an excellent Christian doctor! Unbelievers were converted and many people were healed by prayer in his office. You see, a Christian can be a doctor, the best kind of doctor, if he will put miracle faith ahead of medical science. But a doctor who denies the gospel in his practice is not a good doctor, if he is a Christian at all.

From: email

46. "An incredibly stupid objection against healing..."

This is indeed an incredibly stupid objection against biblical healing, although all objections against healing are stupid, and all critics against healing are stupid, and in deep sin and unbelief. For some reason, I do not come across this one often, but I have heard about it from several people. In one form or another, the objection goes, "If God would always heal, then how can we die?" Sometimes we would spend a decent amount of time teaching on what God's word says about healing. It says that God's very name is healing or healer (Exodus 15:26), that his very nature is one who forgives all our iniquities and heals all our diseases (Psalm 103:3), that Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses (Matthew 8:17), that the prayer of faith will save or heal the sick, and the Lord will raise him up (James 5:15). After all this and much more, without refuting each biblical principle or passage — as if we have said nothing other than making a claim about healing — the person would snark, "But then how are we going to die?"

In death, the spirit leaves the body and returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7). This can happen in several ways. You can be a victim and let sickness humiliate this child of God and consume your flesh until it becomes uninhabitable and forces your spirit out. You can be a martyr and get your head chopped off for the sake of Christ and free your spirit to fly back to God — to a hero's welcome. There is another way. You can be an ordinary Christian who knows his rights in Christ and have faith in God to maintain your health and youth, so that when it is time to die, you simply "fall asleep" in Christ and release your spirit back to God. Many people who had faith in God's healing power died like this, and the doctors could find nothing wrong with them.

The notion that sickness is the only way to die is the kind of pathetic fallen thinking that Christians should have been redeemed from — many centuries ago. This person who challenged you probably thought that he made a clever retort. But his complaint was against God himself: "God, you have made these promises for healing that leaves no room for sickness and no room for doubt, but if you always keep them — if you are never a liar — then how will we die? Even Paul said to die is gain, you know." You did not invent the idea that God's word is God's will, and that God's word teaches healing. It is the gospel. Thus he tried to pose a logical dilemma against the gospel itself. When he did that, he became anti-Christ. Any argument against the gospel of faith is always self-damning. In any case, this person has nothing to worry about. Because he rejects the gospel on healing, he will die in just the way he thinks is right — by sickness. With such unbelief toward the gospel, let me assure him that he will never be stuck in this world with too much health. He will die just fine. His flesh will rot in just the fashion he expects.

While we are at it, this person mentioned that Paul said "to die is gain." What did Paul actually say? Look it up. He wrote, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." Wait a minute. Did he say that he could choose? He appeared undecided as he

wrote the verse. It was a hard choice, because he wanted to leave for his own sake, but he wanted to remain for the people's benefit. Then he chose to stay! He decided to not die! "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all." Isn't this hilarious? Boy, your guy really stepped into some deep something-something here didn't he? You see, for someone like Paul, to live is Christ and to die is his gain but everybody's loss. It is a hard choice. As for someone like your dude, to live is anti-Christ and to die is everybody's gain. The whole world is better off when this anti-gospel unbelieving piece of garbage dies. Now the choice is not nearly as hard. Read a text before you use it.

Oh! How I want to linger on the words "to live is Christ"! But Christians — what a disgrace — wish to focus on sickness and death.

When we minister to those with terminal sickness, and who have suffered so long or who are so weary that they want to die, we could urge them to first receive healing to leave a good testimony for God and then die without sickness if they wish. Sometimes they are willing, and we would build up their faith by the word of God and then pray for them. After they are completely healed from the terminal sickness and the doctors have verified their recovery, some would decide to live for a number of years before dying without sickness. They would just fall over, or fall asleep and not wake up, all without sickness or suffering. Some would know hours or weeks ahead of time, and gather their families to bid them farewell, then die praising God, at times seeing into glory and describing the vision as they depart. But some would decide to die anyway and leave soon after their healing, sometimes even before they leave the hospital. If needed, another Christian could lay hands on such a person and release the spirit in the name of Jesus, and the person should die peacefully within a short time.

From: email

47. "To attack someone with such flattery..."

When I make certain arguments against a doctrine, even showing that it is an anti-gospel heresy, you would sometimes answer, "But Calvin believed this" or "But Spurgeon preached this." Or you might say, "But the Westminster Confession teaches this" or "But this or that historic creed says this." Sometimes you would defend the mere idea of religious traditions, as if that is a sufficient answer.

This is not a refutation, but an amplification. You have not refuted my arguments, but you have just applied them against Calvin, Spurgeon, the historic creed, and your religious traditions. You have not refuted my arguments, but you have just magnified them to destroy all the authorities that you cite against me. It is stupid to say that Calvin disagreed with me unless you also explain how Calvin refuted me, otherwise you have just elevated me above Calvin. If my arguments condemn you, it is useless to use Spurgeon as your human shield, or to hide behind Westminster, because you have just declared that Spurgeon and Westminster fall under the same condemnation, and that I have triumphed over them also.

If you refute the actual content of my arguments, then you would not need to cite a human authority. But if you fail to refute my arguments, then to cite a human authority only makes me greater than that authority. The more you appeal to your authorities, the more you elevate me, so that you make me greater than all the historic theologians, creeds, and denominations combined. It is cruel to attack someone with such flattery. Since I am unmoved by the authorities, I remain unaffected by your adulation, but take care that you do not cause others to stumble by your praise.

The matter is simple. If I argue that it is wrong to rape children, it does not help you to answer that your pastor did it fifty times, even if your pastor is the highest religious authority in a millennium. Unless your pastor has proved that it is right to rape children, your reply only shows that I am a preacher of righteousness, that I possess a greater status than your pastor, and that your pastor is a fraud and a criminal. This is how stupid you are.

48. "Do not say, we have the reformers..."

You hypocrites and unbelievers, who warned you to flee from the wrath of God? Do not say, "We have the reformers as our fathers." I tell you, God can raise up reformers from the rocks. But do you believe the word of God, and take your doctrines from the Scripture alone? Produce doctrines and policies consistent with your claim that you have faith in Jesus Christ. He said that anyone who has faith in him will perform the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles. Teach what he says. Make that your creed. He said that when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive the same power that he used to work miracles, and then you will be his witnesses to the entire world. If you call him Lord, then do what he says. Make it your mission to preach the gospel with healing, prophecy, and signs and wonders.

When I come at you with a divine doctrine, from the Scripture alone, a thousand reformers and creeds cannot save you. Stand up to me with a divine answer, or admit defeat and repent. If you harden your heart, you will burn in hell. Do you say that God is your Father? If God is your Father, then you would believe what the Son said about miracle faith. And you would support anyone who repeats the Son's teachings. But if you make it even an official doctrine to contradict him, who is your father? Tell me, if you nullify the word of God with the traditions of your elders, then who is really your father? The truth is that if you can come at me with an argument from divine revelation or even from simple logic, you would have already done it. The appeal to a human authority is also an admission of defeat and sin.

49. A Memorial or A Miracle?

Satan has possessed the hearts of cessationists to make the Bible turn against itself, so that the more these people claim that they cherish the Bible, the more they put an end to what this Bible promises and commands. They make the Bible into a mere memorial of the word of God, when the Bible is the living word of God, permanent in content, but expanding in action and effect (Hebrews 4:12).

When Peter witnessed the glorious revelation of the transfiguration of Christ, he said, "Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:4). The Bible explains, "For he did not know what to say, because they were terrified" (Mark 9:6). The apostle said it in a moment of fear and delusion. But Christ, the revelation himself, was not interested in making memorials of revelation. He was interested in putting the revelation to work. Thus he walked back down the mountain to reprimand unbelief and overpower demons (Matthew 17:15-18). Peter suggested a memorial to revelation. But Jesus continued a ministry of miracles. This is the difference that faith makes. He said that if you would have faith, then nothing will be impossible for you (Matthew 17:20).

People who are spiritually delusional build memorials. They like to make traditions out of the word of God. They like to divide the word of God into three eras — Moses, Elijah, and Jesus — and make statues out of them. They are obsessed with rituals, special days, and man-made documents. This is the theology of delirium. On the other hand, people who are spiritually awake perform miracles. They like to make explosions out of the word of God. They like to unleash the word of God in all its power and wisdom, to capture the hearts of men, to destroy the works of Satan, to reverse the effects of sin, and to demonstrate the acts of God. What does God's revelation produce in us? A memorial or a miracle?

Although we often refer to it, cessationism is only one form of unbelief and heresy. There are other ways to teach unbelief and to spread false ideas about the gospel. Here is an example that I have used before. At least on paper, Carson and Grudem are not cessationists, and both of them acknowledge that healing is a benefit secured by the atonement. However, they add that the issue is whether this is something that believers can fully receive at this time by faith. Both of them refer to the resurrection body as an example of a benefit that belongs to us right now, but that we will not receive in this life. This is then applied to healing to caution against an "overrealized eschatology." Balanced? Convincing? No. This is mind-bogglingly STUPID.

The resurrection body is not something that we can receive by degrees. You either have a resurrection body, or you do not. And the Bible explicitly teaches that it is reserved for the next life. In contrast, healing is something that we can receive by degrees. You can receive healing in an instant, or gradually recover in an hour or in a week. And the Bible explicitly teaches that it is intended for this life. The two are different in both what they are and how they are fulfilled. The Bible promises healing to faith, just as the salvation of the soul is promised to faith. The accusation of "overrealized eschatology" is a criminal excuse,

because the Bible offers healing to faith without reservations. Carson and Grudem appear to affirm faith in healing, but in fact disguise their unbelief by a theology of appeasement.

Resurrection is not healing. It is not a high degree of healing. It is not even like healing. The Bible says that when we are resurrected, we will be changed, not healed. Thus it would be wrong to compare healing to resurrection, or to say that healing is completed at the resurrection, because healing does not happen at all at the resurrection. If any healing is going to happen, it must happen NOW, or this benefit from the atonement will remain unfulfilled even at the resurrection. But it is promised to faith, and that is the problem. The trouble has nothing to do with eschatology, but faith. When there is no faith, people will look for an excuse. Behold the theology of unbelief! Look how degrading it is to live this way. You see two seasoned theologians resorting to a basic categorical error so ridiculously obvious that it is laughable and distressing at the same time. If they are so STUPID, is there hope for others? Of course. Any ordinary person who will read the Book with faith will see the truth: healing is for this life, and it is received by faith.

50. God's Final Warning to Cessationists

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Cessationists often use this text to support their doctrine, and it appears in their creeds as a proof text. The claim is that Jesus was the ultimate and final revelation from God, and after he came, there would be no additional revelation. How does this put an end to prophecies? It makes no sense. As I have pointed out in several places, cessationists are always making categorical errors when they talk about prophecies, revelations, and the writing of Scripture.

But even if this puts an end to prophecies, how does this put an end to the various miracles like healing the sick and casting out demons? Supposedly, miracles are either new revelations or authentications for new revelations, so that if there would be no new revelations, there would also be no new miracles. However, the Gospels explicitly and repeatedly state that Jesus performed miracles not only to authenticate new revelations, but he did it out of compassion for the people and to fulfill even the oldest revelations, such as God's covenant to Abraham. Oops, we have just refuted the cessationist use of this text. But I have prepared other things to say, so let us pretend that more is needed.

Sometimes their use of the text is straightforward and unadorned, as if we should automatically acknowledge the relevance. Sometimes their use of the text is incorporated into a framework of biblical interpretation, systematic theology, or scheme of redemptive history or progressive revelation that they wish to advance. All of this makes no difference to me. My answer will bulldoze over everything. In fact, the more effort and scholarship they invest into this text for the purpose of cessationism, the more damning my response becomes. Long ago, Satan spoke through heathens, magicians, religionists, and philosophers, but nowadays, he speaks through cessationists. But we are not afraid of their schemes.

Self-Refutation

It is impossible to logically infer cessationism from this text, because there is nothing in this text to stop new revelations and miracles. The text says, "God spoke by the prophets, then he spoke by his Son." From this, the cessationists inferred, "Therefore, God has ceased to speak." But this is not the logically necessary inference. I can just as easily infer, "God will continue to speak by his Son," or "God will return to speak through the prophets instead," or "God will continue to speak by the apostles," or "God will now speak by the prophets, by his Son, and by the apostles," or "God will now speak to all his people by direct revelation," or "God will now speak by his Spirit." There is an infinite number of possibilities. Indeed, after Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, his disciples continued

to prophesy, heal the sick, perform signs and wonders, and even write Scripture. Since the entire New Testament was written by the disciples of Jesus, and not Jesus himself, the cessationist use of Hebrews 1 results in the rejection of the entire New Testament, including the words of Jesus. The cessationist use of Hebrews 1 results in the rejection of Hebrews 1 itself.

This means that a simple appeal to the text has no effect, and even backfires. Rather, additional materials are needed to connect the text to the conclusion. Thus cessationists often integrate it into a theological framework of redemptive history or progressive revelation. Once this framework is assumed, the text is taken to support cessationism. Even then, the text still does not say what they want it to say. In addition to pointing out that the invalid inference persists, one option is to attack the various elements in the framework. You will find that the cessationist framework involves a nest of abused texts and forced assumptions. Now if you deal with one cessationist's framework, perhaps another would claim that there is a different one. So I would rather not address that at all, but answer in a way that runs over the whole bunch of them — all their frameworks, all their theologians, all their traditions and creeds, at the same time.

Let us consider what this interpretive framework will need to accomplish. It must declare that Jesus was the zenith of revelation, and the final word from God. However, it must somehow leave room for his disciples to continue at least decades of miracles of prophecy, revelation, healing, nature, judgment, and so on. The framework must hold constant the claim that Jesus was "final," but allow for an equal legitimacy and authority for Scripture that came after Jesus, including Scripture that records the words of Jesus in the first place. More than that, this is extended not only to the apostles, but to each person who wrote Scripture, since many parts of the New Testament were not written by apostles, and some parts even by individuals whose relationship with the apostles could not be established. Even more than this, after extending this legitimacy and authority to some individuals after Jesus and even other than the apostles, it must then somehow remove any legitimacy and authority to individuals other than and subsequent to these individuals who wrote Scripture. This usual evangelical view of divine inspiration cannot even support itself, but it crushes upon itself and brings cessationism along with it.

My own formulation for the absolute inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture does not produce these problems. Since I have explained it in a number of places, I will not repeat it here. In any case, this shows that even without addressing any framework of redemptive history or progressive revelation, no usual formulation for the inspiration of Scripture can support cessationism, because it cannot even support itself. For the cessationist to have a sustainable doctrine of inspiration, he must switch to my formulation, but my formulation forbids cessationism, not due to my own imposition, but due to the very nature of God. If this is unclear, review my explanation of the doctrine. Again, before I arrive at the answer that I am most interested in, the cessationist use of the text has been destroyed a second time. We must pretend once more that it is still intact, so that we can continue.

Self-Damnation

It is worse than useless to declare that God has said something, even that God has said everything, and refuse to also ask, "What did he say?" It is worse than useless because the declaration becomes a self-incriminating confession that one is aware of God's word, but that he is not interested in knowing or obeying God's word (Romans 2). You say, "Long ago, God spoke by the prophets, but now, God spoke by his Son. His Son! That's the ultimate. That's the final word." But I answer, "So what did he say? Do you believe it? Do you obey it?"

Jesus said to his disciples, and not only to his apostles, "Preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead." Someone Jesus never ordained was casting out demons in his name, and the Master said, "Do not stop him." He said, "Anyone who has faith can command a miracle to happen, like cursing a tree to death or commanding it to be planted in the sea, and more than that, he can command even a mountain to move, and it will happen." He said, "If you will believe, you will see the glory of God, even a miracle like raising Lazarus from the dead." He said, "Anyone who believes in me will do the same miracles that I did, and he will do even greater miracles than I did." He said, "I will not let you become like orphans, but I will send you another Helper. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive the same power that I used to work miracles."

Cessationists pretend to love the Bible, but they do not care what the Bible says. They defend it only as a symbol, a symbol that they exploit to justify whatever they wish to believe. If God happens to agree with them, well then, it is God's lucky day! Cessationists, you claim that Jesus was the final word, but what did Jesus say? If you do not believe him, and if you do not do what he says, then you are only using Jesus as the mascot for a religion you invented. You are treating him like your clown. Dance, Jesus, dance! What did he say? He said, "Why do you call me Lord, but do not do what I say? I never knew you!"

Jeremiah warned his people because they said "The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!" but they had no reverence for the Lord of the temple. They assumed that they would be safe from invaders simply because the temple was there, but the temple had become meaningless to them. Cessationists shout, "The book of the Lord! The book of the Lord!" But what does the Lord say in the book? He says those who follow him must perform miracles, prophecies, and all kinds of signs and wonders by faith. The Bible says that one who is not a doer of the word of God deceives himself. He is like a person who looks into a mirror but forgets what he looks like when he walks away. If you scream "God said something!" but refuse to do what he says, then you are deceiving yourself. You think you are a champion of orthodoxy and a defender of the faith, but you might be worse than an unbeliever.

What about Hebrews itself? What does Hebrews say? The emphasis is not the finality of revelation, but the severity of compromise — of unbelief, retreat, or apostasy — so that salvation itself is at risk (Hebrews 2:3, 4:1-5, 6:6, 10:39). The writer's argument is that in the past, God spoke by his prophets, but now, God spoke by his Son, a messenger greater than the prophets and the angels. Now if those who disobeyed a message from the prophets

and the angels were punished, how will we escape if we disobey a message of salvation from the Son of God? Before we draw a conclusion about the finality of the message, we ought to first consider the damning consequence of neglect, unbelief, and disobedience, because this is the point of the text.

Just as the readers of Hebrews could not back away from what the Son of God said and still cling to this "so great salvation," how can cessationists cling to salvation when they explicitly contradict what the Son of God said in their doctrines, creeds, and actions? Cessationists have no right to interrogate us, or even to talk to us. They are the ones in danger. The first item on our agenda must be to ascertain whether cessationists can defend their claim to salvation. Are they saved because they believe in Jesus Christ? But they do not believe. They clearly do not believe what Christ actually said. So how are they Christians?

In the past, people disobeyed God's message from the prophets, but now, cessationists disobey God's message from the Son of God. Why would they use Hebrews? Why would they draw attention to this? Why would you take the fist of God and punch yourself in the face? Can it be true? Are they even more stupid than I thought? The fact that they use verses from Hebrews 1 and 2 to support cessationism makes the situation even worse for them, because they show that they are aware of this part of Scripture. The more they invest into this text and make use of it, the more they show that they are aware of it. The Bible teaches that ignorance is not an excuse, but the cessationists have destroyed even this option for themselves.

Divine-Ultimatum

Cessationists, Jesus Christ is God's ultimatum to you. Through Moses, God spoke to you about a future where all his people would become prophets (Numbers 11:29). Through Elijah, God showed you a man who prophesied, healed the sick, and worked miracles, and then said that he was just like you (James 5:17). Through Joel, God promised you that he would pour out his Spirit on all his people, so that they would receive prophecies, visions and dreams, and perform all kinds of signs and wonders (Joel 2:28-29). Through Jesus, God demonstrated to you prophecies, healing miracles, nature miracles, and all kinds of signs and wonders, and declared that anyone who has faith can do the same things and even greater things (John 14:12). By him, God issued his ultimatum to unbelief, tradition, and cessationism — to you. Doomsday is coming. Through Peter, God confirmed to you that Joel's promise has been fulfilled, and that it would continue to be available for all future generations (Acts 2:16, 39). Through the apostles and disciples, God proved to you the powers of the Spirit and the effects of faith, and that all believers could participate in the ministry of miracles (Acts 1-28).

Cessationists, like your forefathers, you have always resisted the Holy Spirit and persecuted God's messengers (Acts 7:51). Jesus Christ is God's final message and final warning to you. He is your last chance. If you reject this charismatic Messiah, you will not receive a cessationist Messiah. If you reject his theology of charismatic powers, his

doctrine of extreme faith, and his mandate of expansionism by miracles, you will not receive a different creed or tradition. No one else is coming. No one will come to overturn his promises about faith, the Holy Spirit, and the performance of the same works, and the greater works. Jesus Christ is the only Savior. If you do not believe this one, you are finished. If you wait for another, you will die in your sin and burn in hell. As for Scripture, there will be no more development in God's written revelation to alter what God has said. This is your last chance to believe that all of God's people can receive prophecies and miracles by faith. Your own doctrine destroys any excuse or escape.