

Borders

Volume I

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HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God." (Mark 11:22)

Jesus referred to faith as a topic in itself. He made it a subject of study. He was explicit about it. He was deliberate in teaching about it. He said to his disciples, "Have faith in God." In other places, he said things like, "Fear not, only believe," and "All things are possible to the one who believes," and "According to your faith be it unto you." Each of these statements is a sermon in itself. Think about what he said.

God wants us to live life thinking that there is no reason to fear, but that we should have faith only. God wants us to live life thinking that all things are possible to the one who has faith. And when Jesus said that, he was referring to a miracle, to something superhuman and supernatural. If someone disagrees with this, he disagrees with Jesus Christ. He disagrees with a central and obvious doctrine of the gospel. Take notice of him, because this person is a servant of the Faithless. Remove him from your life.

And God wants us to live life thinking that we can have whatever we believe that he will do for us. We cannot use God as an excuse for our failures and our sicknesses. We cannot claim to be victims of some unknown decree of God. No, Jesus said, what you believe God will do to you is what he will do to you. This is God's will. This is God's decree. When he said this, he was referring to miracles, to supernatural blessings and events. What you believe that God will do for you, even if it is a miracle, God will do it for you. This is the assumption by which we should look at the world and live our life.

You are never a victim. You are never limited. You are never doomed. You are never desperate. You are never alone. God will come to you. God will answer you. God will rescue you. God will heal you and prosper you. God will increase your spiritual power and fruit. God is the answer to all your problems. And beyond your problems, God will give you the desires of your heart. How can you know? Faith! The faith in your heart is God's answer.

John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then he said, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," and "he has made him known." Jesus was the Word of God who had been with the Father since the beginning. Jesus, who was with God and was God himself, became human and lived with us, and he made God known to us by word and deed. He knew God and how we ought to relate to God. And what did he teach? Faith.

This is not a faith that tolerates disappointments from God and then spins out religious theories to romanticize the disappointments. This is not a faith that accepts suffering and that is overpowered by circumstances. This would not be faith, but mere human piety that puts up an appearance of godliness. When someone does not have faith, he tends to redefine faith to this counterfeit version, so that he does not become totally devastated, and so that he is not exposed as faithless and worthless.

Jesus insisted on the kind of faith that receives whatever it wants from God. Faith is not disappointed. Faith is not afraid. It is a faith that overcomes suffering and that overpowers all circumstances. It is not a faith that assumes God wants to limit you, that he wants you to have less and expect less. No, this is a faith that believes God wants you to have more and to do more. Hold on to this idea of faith. It is the way to a better life, and to genuine service toward God. This is the faith that will heal the sick, reverse poverty, repair relationships, and uphold truth and godliness. This is the faith that will save the world.

YOU WILL HAVE WHAT YOU SAY

"I tell you the truth, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." (Mark 11:23)

God is sovereign. He rules over all things, all beings, and all events. This is true, and it is a fundamental principle in our thinking about theology and the world. In order for our thinking about God to be correct, God has to be God. However, most people who begin from this principle make the wrong application from it.

This includes most of the influential theologians and preachers throughout history. As a result, they have formulated doctrines that are false, and that are detrimental to the gospel and to humanity. They think that because God has all power, we have no power, and because God has all control, we have no control. Thus to them faith does not mean to insist that something happens for them, but it means to accept whatever happens to them, because whatever happens to them is the will of God.

They claim that God's revelation is in Scripture, but in reality they believe that God's revelation is in their environment, as in the things that happen to them and the ways that people treat them, because their environment is the will of God. In effect, their environment becomes an extension of God, or we can even say that their environment is God, and that is what they worship and believe in. Then they even use their circumstances and experiences to interpret what God says in Scripture.

This is backward, and it is a grave mistake. God's word is God's revelation to us, and we must let him tell us how to interpret our circumstances and experiences, and what to do about them. Jesus is the Word of God. Only he is God's will personified. The Bible calls him the "exact expression" or "exact representation" of God's nature. Our environment is not God, and not the exact expression of God. Our circumstances, our feelings and experiences, are not the exact representation of God's being.

Jesus said something very different about how we must regard our environment. Again, many people have reasoned that God's power implies our weakness. They think that because God has all power, we have no power, and because God has all control, we have no control. Jesus did not think this way. He reasoned from the supremacy of God to the opposite conclusion.

First, Jesus said, "Have faith in God." Have faith in this God who is sovereign. Have faith in this God who has all power. Have faith in this God who has all control. Then what? The preachers and scholars say, then watch and accept whatever happens. But Jesus said, have faith, and then you do not have to put up with anything. He said that if you have faith, you can command a mountain to throw itself into the sea.

In another place, he said that if you have faith, you can command a tree to replant itself in the sea. In other words, faith is able to not merely restore the natural and healthy order of things, but it can compel even unnatural and bizarre things to occur. Doesn't this sound like a power that belongs to God alone? Surely, but by faith in God we also wield this ability. An angel said what we admit: "For nothing is impossible with God." But Jesus also said, "All things are possible to the one who has faith."

In the journey of life, if something stands in your way, you do not have to accept it. You can tell it to get out of your way. If there is a sickness in your body, you do not have to accept it, thinking that it is the will of God. That is not faith. For if you have faith, you will tell it to pick up itself and get out of your body.

Jesus reasoned from God's power to our ability to exercise power and take control, and faith is the bridge in this thinking process. Therefore, when someone reasons from God's power to our lack of power and lack of control, it must mean that this faith factor is missing in his life and in his thinking. It must mean that there is no faith in his religion and there is no faith in his theology.

Thus to reason from the sovereignty of God to our lack of power and control is in fact the line of reasoning that can belong only to the unbeliever, to someone who is still headed toward hell. Only someone who does not follow Jesus and who does not have faith is supposed to think this way.

If you have faith, you do not need to follow this way of thinking. It is not the theology of the pious and the humble, but the theology of the faithless and the disobedient, even the theology of the reprobate. So do not accept this kind of doctrine. Do not fall into this trap. And do not join yourself to people who think like this.

If you follow Jesus, and if you have faith in God, take your thinking in the opposite direction. Because God has all power, you have power. Because God has all control, you are in control. Because all things are possible to God, all things are possible to you when you have faith in him.

We have power, because we follow the one who has all the power. We have power, because he has infused faith into our hearts. We have power, because he has revealed to us the truth of the universe and the way of faith. We have power, because he has called us and anointed us with his Spirit.

Because I follow Jesus Christ, the world cannot push me around, and Satan cannot bully or harass me. I am never a victim. I am always able to take command. I am always in control under God. Because I follow Jesus, I possess a sense of control and power. This is not control over God and not power against God, but control over creation and circumstances, and power against problems and obstacles, and the forces of evil and decay.

The unbeliever is helpless in life. He is a victim of circumstances and a victim of demons and diseases. He has no power. He is not in control. On the other hand, the Christian must affirm the tremendous power and control that he possesses under God. He has been made supernatural by the faith that God has given him.

Following this God who has all power does not mean that we have no power, but it means that we have more power than all the people who do not acknowledge him. Faith in God elevates our possibilities to superhuman levels, because God is more than human. God is sovereign, and therefore we can decide to move mountains and work miracles by faith in him. It is because God is sovereign that we can take control in life.

Why does the idea of God take people in these two different directions? What is the difference? The difference is faith. Jesus said, "Have faith in God." Then you have power. Then you have control. Then you can dominate creation itself. The people who reason contrary to Jesus do not have faith. They do not know that they lack faith, or they do not want to admit it, and this is why they resort to redefining faith itself. This kind of teaching drags the church down into defeat and misery.

Once you understand how faith makes such a difference in theology, you are now able to see people for what they are. You are now free to cast aside faithless preachers and theologians. You are free to topple historic and modern religious idols. You are free to renounce faithless creeds and traditions. Have faith in God. Dominate your circumstances. Demolish your obstacles. Destroy your demons and diseases. Proclaim your freedom and success in God. Then tell people this good news about faith. Tell them: Faith can change your life. Faith can save the world.

PRAYER: HOW TO GET THINGS

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and you shall have it." (Mark 11:24)

Prayer is often taught as a way to fellowship with God, to change yourself and to align yourself to God. But Jesus talked about prayer as a way to get things. He said that you must pray, and must continue to pray. You must believe, and you must persist. And when you pray, you must receive from God. Get things from him.

In his teachings on prayer, Jesus often made this the major point or even the only point. This is considered the most unspiritual motive by religious people. But Jesus is the standard of what is righteous and spiritual. It is not up to preachers and theologians to define these things, and then twist or ignore the words of Jesus in order to maintain their own ideas and traditions.

The people who heard Jesus were already obsessed with getting things, yet he still asserted this perspective on prayer, that prayer is for getting things that you decide and that you desire from God. He did not think that it was man-centered or unspiritual.

Of course it is spiritual to pray in order to get things from God. Jesus said that they worried about what they would eat, what they would drink, and what they would wear. He redirected their attention to God. They ought to focus on God first, and have faith, and then all the things that they used to worry about would be added to them, including food, clothing, shelter, and all the things that come under money. This is a righteous and spiritual way of living.

Preachers often demand Christians to worship God when they pray, and to fellowship with him. Stop asking him for things all the time, they say. And they claim that the "give me" type of prayer is the lowest form of prayer. Jesus never suggested anything like this. He told people to ask for things, and to persist when they ask for things instead of giving up. He would teach this again and again, and in different ways.

Don't you realize that, by asking God for things, you acknowledge that he is God? And that is what worship means. To praise him and not ask him for anything is nothing but high-minded and pretentious religion, even false worship. Are we self-sufficient like God? Shall we relate to him as equals? Is that worship? Jesus continuously asked God to do this and that, to give this and that. Should we think that we are better than Jesus? Is that true faith and piety? No, it is because he alone is God that I keep asking him for things, and it is because I keep asking him for things that it becomes evident that I acknowledge him alone as God. And that is true worship.

Of course we utter thanks to God. Of course we sing praises to him. We fellowship with him when we pray. We dedicate ourselves to him and surrender our lives to him when we pray. And we repent of our sins when we pray. However, Christians have regarded getting things from God as a lesser purpose in prayer, and they are ashamed of asking for things. This has been

devastating to the health of the church and the world. It has made much of worship symbolic, cutting humanity off from the powers and resources of Almighty God.

Jesus made it a priority in prayer to get things from God. It is essential to holy living and the well-being of his people that they know how to call upon God. Always get things when you pray, so that you can move forward in life and ministry. Receive from God's powers and riches, so that your family and your church can make progress in this world.

Preachers will admonish you to ask for spiritual things, if you wish to get things at all. They do not understand what they say. In reality, they wish to restrict prayer from concrete and evident applications, because they have no faith for these things. However, God is a spirit, and everything that he does is spiritual. The gifts of healing and the workings of miracles are as spiritual as things can get, since they come from the Spirit of God and cannot be imitated by human power, but they produce physical effects. Since these things are spiritual, then I am not seeking unspiritual things when I ask for them. By definition, when I seek healings and miracles, I seek spiritual things.

Moreover, Jesus said that when I have faith, I will not worry about money, food, and clothing, and these things will be added to me. Faith is spiritual. It is just as spiritual as love, patience, and humility. But Jesus said that faith can heal the sick, cast out demons, walk on water, and move a mountain. Spiritual forces are even more powerful to produce material blessings and effects than natural forces, because spiritual forces have no limitations and can routinely work miracles.

Then there is the idea that we should focus on praying for other people. Spending much time praying for yourself, or spending any time on that at all, is portrayed as selfish. But Jesus prayed for himself all the time, and he taught people to pray to get things, and to get things for themselves. You are aware of your own needs and desires, and if you are taken care of, then you will not be a burden to other people. Everyone has needs and desires, and when you have a ready resource, even an entire God who waits for your prayers, but by an act of defiance, unbelief, and false piety you refuse to ask him for things, it shows that your idea of religion is in fact selfish and grotesque. This is deception. It is a trap designed to weaken you, to cut you off from God and to destroy you.

Do not feel embarrassed to ask God for things. Do not think that you are doing something wrong if you keep asking. This is the way of faith. This is the way of holiness and humility. Jesus wants you to live this way. This is the good news, but there are voices that want you to deviate from it. Do not accept a different gospel.

Prayer is not an exercise or exertion for mere psychological relief. It is an appeal to God for concrete blessings and solutions. Prayer can make you feel better, but it can make everything else better, because God makes everything better. Prayer can save your life. It can call down the power of God and propel you forward. Prayer can heal the sick and raise the dead. It can

dispel the powers of darkness and advance the kingdom of God. Prayer can do all these things, because God can do all these things when you ask.

Prayer, it has been said, is the means by which God gives us what he decides we should receive. That is, prayer is the means by which the will of God is granted in our lives. We can agree with this. But what is the will of God? Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and you shall have it." Isn't that the will of God, or did Jesus contradict the will of God? And Jesus also said, "According to your faith be it unto you." Was that against the will of God?

No, we can agree that we receive the will of God in prayer, but this does not result in defeat and suffering. It is wrong to assume that the will of God is against us, or that it will disappoint us. The will of God is for us to ask in faith, and receive what we ask. The will of God is for us to persist in prayer, to keep asking for what we decide, even in the face of apparent rejection, and then receive what we ask. The will of God is for us to ask for miracles, and receive miracles. The will of God is salvation, healing, success, and victory.

If you do not have something that you want, do not accept that as the will of God. You can get it, if you have faith in God's ability, and you put that faith into action. If you have goals and dreams that appear unlikely, do not accept that as the will of God. You can reach it, if you put that hope into action. Ask God to give you what you hope for. If you see someone with a problem, do not accept that as the will of God. You can help anyone that you meet, if you put your love into action.

Pray, and have faith that your prayer matters. Ask God for things. When you ask God for things, you put your faith into action, you put your hope into action, you put your love into action. And as you make progress in life and ministry, the will of God also makes progress in the world through you.

DON'T ASK FOR SCORPIONS

"Who among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)

Jesus restored people's confidence in God, and in the effectiveness of prayer toward God. He knew God, and he was God. He directed prayers to the Father. And he had received prayers directed toward himself. He knew about prayer more than anyone. And he said that when you pray, God will not only answer you, but he will answer you in the way you ask, and give you the very thing that you ask.

Suppose you ask me to tell you the time, and I slap you in the face. That is an answer, but it is not a good answer, and it is not the answer you want. It does not address your need or your desire. Suppose you ask me to bring you some groceries, and I bring you some clothes. That is an answer, and this time it is not harmful to you, but it does not address your request, and you remain in a worsening state of lack and suffering.

If we keep on like this, your confidence in me would erode. You would think that if you need to know the time, you should ask someone else, or you should find out for yourself, so that you don't get slapped in the face, and still don't know the time. And if you want some groceries, you should ask somebody else for help, or visit the market yourself. Appealing for my help becomes useless and unpredictable. Whenever you speak up, you never know what you will get from me, or what I will do to you. It would be better to turn away from me and turn to other people, or become self-reliant. If you have any relationship with me at all, there would not be total trust and exchange, but much of it would be symbolic, and there would be much reservation and suspicion.

This is what faithless teachings on prayer have done. They warp people's perception about God. They make their worship of God tiresome. Their religion becomes an additional burden to all the problems that they face. Instead of swooping in as a mighty savior, God becomes a giant threat added on top of all their worries. This kind of theology transforms God into one of the cruel and capricious pagan deities, who do not exist at all or that are in fact demons that oppress those who have not discovered freedom in Christ Jesus. This is an injustice against God, and against the people whom he calls to worship him.

Jesus made this point on purpose, that when you ask God for one thing, he would not give you a different thing, because faithless theology and tradition always attempt to justify failure and disappointment. And there is so much failure and disappointment, because in faithless theology and tradition there is in fact no God, except as a word or symbol. Faithless religionists would tell you to pray, and then say that regardless of what you ask, whatever you get is the answer. Thus failure is never your fault, but it is God's decision. This is also how they deceive

themselves. Prayer, therefore, aggravates your pain and suffering, but you are commanded to accept it as the will of God.

According to faithless theology, regardless of what you ask or how much faith you possess, God will respond by giving you something that he decides is best, and that is probably different from what you ask or the opposite of what you ask, even what you would regard as a threat to you and something that would make your situation much worse. Jesus denied this teaching on God and on prayer. He indicated that to think this is how God operates is to suggest that God is worse than human sinners.

Faithless doctrine leads to uncertainty in prayer, and the worry that prayer might lead to greater suffering. In fact, it is almost guaranteed that you will get something different from what you ask, but you are forced to say that it is something better than what you ask, because it is something that God decides to give you instead. Jesus overturned such absurdity by his teachings on God, and on faith and prayer.

How would you know what God decides to give you? According to Jesus, just listen to yourself! Do you hear what you are asking in prayer? What you ask is what God decides to give you. The child asks for bread, so the parent decides to give him bread. The child asks for a fish, so the parent decides to give him a fish. When a child speaks up and asks for a fish, he knows what he will have for dinner. How does he know? He does not need special insight into the will of his parents. He does not need to wait for whatever appears on the table to know what his parents have decided. He just listens to himself. Whatever he says is what he will receive. Whatever he asks is what the parents will decide to give him. This is the theology of faith, and it is as simple as that.

There is another side to how we apply this teaching of Jesus. If it is true that when we ask for a fish, God will give us a fish, and if it is true that when we ask for a fish, God will not give us a snake, then it must mean that when we get a snake, it must not be from God and we must not accept it. If a child asks for a fish but receives a snake and accepts it, he is either mentally disabled or chronically abused. When I ask God for a fish, and a snake appears, I must not think that it is God's answer to my prayer. I must reject the snake, and insist on a fish.

If I pray for healing, and the sickness continues or worsens, I must never think that it is the will of God for the sickness to continue or worsen, because that is not what I ask. Since I ask for healing, then only healing is the answer from God. Just because something happens after my prayer does not mean that it is God's answer to my prayer. I can have confidence that it is not the final word on the situation because it is not what I ask for in prayer. God's answer to my prayer is what I ask in my prayer, not something different or opposite. The Faithless teach that God might replace what you ask with something different, something less, something painful, and then they threaten you to lie and say that it is better. This kind of oppressive doctrine is among the religious injustices that Jesus came to overturn.

Jesus said that God is eager to give "good things" to those who ask. And these good things are not defined by some unknown standard. In his own teaching, Jesus defined the good things as the things that you ask in prayer. So don't ask for a stone when you can ask for bread, or a snake when you can ask for a fish. Don't ask for sickness, but have faith for healing! Don't ask for poverty, but have faith for prosperity! Don't ask for depression and defeat, but have faith for happiness and success! Don't ask for suffering, but have faith for deliverance and victory. Don't ask for shame and stagnation in your ministry, but have faith for miracles and prophecies to accompany your evangelism and teaching.

It is impossible to restrict this teaching to the several categories of things that the religious consider worthy of mentioning to God. This is because the whole point is how God responds to what we decide to ask him, not what he decides to give on his own. Jesus did not say that when a child asks for a fish, it would be good to give him a toy. The child might very well ask for a toy on a different occasion, but the point of the teaching is that the parents would give the child exactly what he asks, not something good in another category, and not even some other kind of food.

It is not a matter of whether God wants to give us a spiritual or natural thing, or this or that thing in this or that category. The teaching is not applied to any specific category of things until we know what you are asking. If you are asking for money to pay your bills and fund your projects, then the topic is how God responds to your prayer for money. The topic does not suddenly become spiritual wealth, or healing and prophecy, or some other thing. The category that this teaching applies to is defined by your prayer.

Jesus said that not a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from the will of God. Yet more than anyone, he emphasized the decisive power of the will of man in faith, prayer, and miracles. If we care so much about the will of God in prayer, then let us never ask for things that are against the will of God. Let us never think that the bad things are his answer to us. Never ask for sickness, poverty, and suffering. Do not accept disease. Do not settle for defeat. What if a little girl asks her father for a snake or scorpion? Would that not put him in a difficult position? Would that not be an abuse? Just as to ask for a snake would be to put a good parent to the test, to accept sickness and failure would be to put a good God to the test. It would be a form of rebellion and abuse.

In any case, Jesus offered this teaching more than once. As he traveled to various places, he would repeat his lessons to the different crowds. So we find the same teaching expressed a little differently in the Gospel of Luke: "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?"

In the Gospel of Matthew, the teaching is applied to all good things, and the good things are defined by the person who prays, the one who asks for these good things. Here in the Gospel of Luke, the teaching can likewise apply to all good things, since Jesus also said that the human parents knew how to give good gifts to their children. However, he made a specific application to the Father's readiness to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

This is another piece of good news. The Holy Spirit is not an empty expression in the Bible, but refers to God himself, the very Spirit of God that brings miracles and prophecies. Luke consistently refers to the Holy Spirit with this in mind. As Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." And Jesus included the Holy Spirit as one of the things that is ours for the asking.

The Spirit is not restricted to those who have some special calling or qualification, or those who have attained unique levels of holiness. A parent will give a fish to a child who asks for a fish. The parent will not refuse to give the child a fish, or give the child a snake instead. In the same way, the Father God will give anyone who asks him for the Holy Spirit. He will not deny the one who asks, and he will not give the person something else, something different, or something inferior. This person will receive nothing less than the Holy Spirit and all that it means to receive him -- power, wisdom, courage, and miracles.

Jesus was not referring to salvation. He did not mean that the Father would save anyone who asks. When you repent of your sins and receive salvation, you do not say, "Father, give me your Holy Spirit," or "Holy Spirit, I believe in you and receive you." No, you talk about Jesus. You believe in your heart that Jesus suffered and died in your place, and that God raised him from the dead for your justification. And you declare with your mouth that you renounce your sins and former life, and that from now on you would follow Jesus Christ, that you would believe in him and obey him. In this way, you are saved. And you are saved even if there is no knowledge and no mention of the Holy Spirit.

Asking for the Holy Spirit is another event altogether. It happens after a person receives Jesus Christ, and it involves a different operation of God. When a person follows Jesus Christ, he begins a new life. And when a person receives the Holy Spirit, he obtains another dimension of power to live this new life and to preach the gospel with power, wisdom, and with miracles. He becomes a witness for Christ. When you receive Christ, you receive life. When you receive the Spirit, you receive power.

Jesus and Luke considered this so important that a specific application was made for the teaching on prayer. You can ask for many things in prayer, and God will give you what you ask, but if you are going to ask for anything at all, make sure you ask for the Holy Spirit, knowing that this means you are asking for superhuman power, wisdom, boldness, and all kinds of signs and wonders and supernatural experiences.

In the teachings of Jesus, including the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit always comes with miraculous and prophetic powers. The teaching of Jesus on prayer would mean that when you ask for the Holy Spirit, God will give you this same Holy Spirit, and the same powers and experiences. He will not give you an evil spirit, or some other spirit that has no miracles and no revelations. The Holy Spirit will teach you all truths, including the same truths demonstrated in Scripture. God will not give you another spirit, and you must not accept another spirit or another gospel.

It is necessary to emphasize this teaching from Jesus. If receiving the Spirit is merged with receiving Christ, then it is in fact destroyed, and the people's potential to receive this extra dimension of power is also destroyed. Satan has used his theologians to maintain this error in theology, because the Spirit's power in God's people is a most extreme threat to the kingdom of darkness. The ones who oppose this distinction between receiving Jesus Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit is in effect speaking against the Holy Spirit. "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

After someone has become a Christian, we can use the teaching of Jesus on prayer to build his confidence. If he asks God for the Holy Spirit, which means he also asks for the supernatural powers and experiences that the Spirit brings, then this is what God will give him. God will not withhold the Spirit from him, and God will not give him some other spirit. God will not give him a spirit that fails to produce what the Holy Spirit brings. If you ask to heal the sick and cast out demons, or to speak in tongues and prophesy, God will not refuse, and he will not give you something lame and weak instead. First, you are encouraged to ask. Second, you are promised the answer. Third, you must refuse anything different or inferior.

TEACH, AND REPEAT

Therefore I will always remind you about these things, even though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. And I think it is right to keep on reminding you as long as I am alive. (2 Peter 1:12-13)

Scholars often make bizarre speculations about the historical context of the biblical text, and this approach has warped their interpretation. They would favor factors outside of the text and theories about the intentions of the writers more than the words of the texts themselves. The result defies basic reading comprehension and makes them look like lunatics.

One of their awful habits is to infer that whatever a biblical writer said, the opposite must be happening in the reader, so that the writer was correcting the situation. For example, Paul wrote to Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and self-control." Some scholars would infer that Timothy was timid and fearful. However, Paul referred to love and self-control as well, so should we think that Timothy was also characterized by hatred and insanity? For some reason, the scholars do not take it this far. When this way of inferring the historical context has been implemented hundreds of times, their representation of the Scripture becomes drastically warped and mistaken. Don't be afraid to disagree with biblical scholars. They are far less competent than they want you to think.

Suppose I say to you, "Living in the grace and power of the Lord Jesus, we should be full of joy." Does this mean that you are sullen and fearful, the very picture of depression, and I am rebuking you for it? Certainly not! My statement is something that we can say to a believer at any time. If I say to a congregation, "Let us praise the Lord," does it mean that the people constantly curse God? When Jesus said to his disciples, "Have faith in God," did he think that they were atheists? But you would see this insane approach to biblical interpretation in scholarly literature, even the most professional and technical resources.

Here we have evidence that the scholars are wrong. Peter said that he wanted to remind his readers of the things he wrote about, and he said that these readers knew the things he was saying, and that they were established in them. When the Bible teaches something, we cannot automatically infer that something opposite is happening with the readers. All Christian doctrines and admonitions can be said to those who already know them and practice them. It is good to be reminded and be strengthened in the truth.

Reminders are important in Christian teaching and Christian living. Repetition is appropriate, and should not be despised. Peter was aware of what he was doing, that he was repeating what his readers knew, and he was doing it on purpose. A little later in the letter, he said again, "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."

Do not think that you are making progress as a preacher only if you are continuously presenting new information and addressing new topics. Sometimes preachers do that to build up their

own pride, and because they wish to impress the congregations with how much they know. Resist this temptation. Repetition is good for the ministry, and good for the audience. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you." Although Paul told them to rejoice, this does not mean that they were depressed. The Philippians were some of the most dedicated and generous Christians that Paul had worked with. But the apostle wrote the same things to them that he had said before, and he said that it was a safeguard for them.

Do you want the people who hear you to be safe in their faith, to stay on the right path, and to be able to resist deception and temptation? Then teach them the word of God, and teach them again. And then do it again. What if the people already know the basics of theology, but you teach them over and over again about the nature of God, the work of Christ, and the power of the Spirit? You might save their faith and prevent their apostasy. What if the people already know about receiving healing from God by faith, and you teach it again and again? You might save their lives. And what if the people already know about God's teachings on love and faithfulness in marriage? If you repeat what God said to them, you might save their homes and their children.

Repeating a teaching often enables some people to understand or experience it for the first time. But even if they are established in the truth, repetition continues to produce benefits for them. Put down your pride, and do what is good for the people.

Likewise, cast away your pride and lust, and your evil ambitions, and do what is good for yourself. If a book teaches the truth, especially if the way it is written increases your understanding and confidence, read it again. If a sermon encourages you to follow Jesus with more love and dedication, listen to it again. If a teaching enables you to receive healing and prosperity from God, and to help others receive and better their lives, then review it again. Use what is available to you to remind yourself of the teachings of God's word.

Do not think that you are making progress in the faith only if you are constantly learning new information or reading a new author or a new topic. So what if you already know the basics of theology? Review them again. It will make your grasp of the Christian faith more coherent, and make you more resistant to deception. So what if you have already heard the teachings on faith and healing dozens of times? Listen again. It will make you stronger and more immune to diseases, so that you can be a more effective follower of Jesus Christ. And it might even save your life.

By teaching something over and over again, the people will more likely practice and experience what you are teaching. Likewise, by reading or listening to something repeatedly, you will make that teaching a reality in your life, or experience it stronger than before. You will rekindle the words and the gifts of God that are within you.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

After a person has been born again and has believed in Jesus Christ, a vital next step is for him to receive the Holy Spirit. The Bible calls this the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, or receiving the Holy Spirit. The Faithless have resisted this teaching. They claim that what happens to us at conversion, when we believe in Jesus Christ, is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and they claim that when we receive Jesus Christ, we also receive the Holy Spirit.

However, the Bible contradicts this. Although the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible does not say that this is to receive the Holy Spirit. It reserves this type of expression to a separate and subsequent experience. Regardless of how much the Holy Spirit is involved in regeneration when we receive Jesus Christ, it is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it is not being filled with the Holy Spirit. It does not matter in what sense one claims to "have" the Holy Spirit after conversion, the Bible does not say that this person has received the Holy Spirit.

The Bible describes regeneration as something performed by the Holy Spirit, but it refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit as something performed by Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit causes us to be born again, convinces us of our need for Jesus Christ and creates faith in us to follow him. At this point, we are saved from the wrath of God. We are the children of God. When we receive Jesus Christ, we receive forgiveness and salvation. God credits the righteousness of Christ to our account.

After this, Jesus Christ baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. This is not for regeneration, not for forgiveness, and not for salvation. Rather, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit upon us to give us power -- power to live this new life, power to speak for him, and power to perform miracles in his name.

The Faithless distort the letters of Paul to supplant this doctrine of Spirit baptism, but Paul himself asserts this doctrine of Spirit baptism in the Acts of the Apostles. In his letters, Paul would often assume that his readers have the Holy Spirit. False theology exploits this and claims the apostle thought that all those who had converted to Jesus also received the Holy Spirit at the same time.

However, we must remember that Paul's letters were written years after the baptism of the Holy Spirit had become the norm. He also assumed that his readers had received water baptism. Are we to assume that everyone who receives Jesus Christ is automatically baptized in water? Are we to think that when someone believes in Jesus, water supernaturally appears and drenches the person without delay? Nobody makes this absurd claim about water baptism, but they say this about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Of course we could assume that those who were saved by faith in Jesus had also received water baptism, because it was the standard teaching. Likewise, Paul could speak to Christians as if they had received the Holy Spirit, because it was the standard teaching that those who had received Jesus should afterward also receive the Holy Spirit by faith. But it was a separate event, just as water baptism was a separate event.

The distinction is vital to the health of believers and churches, and to the progress of the gospel in the world. The conflation of receiving Jesus Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit has effectively eliminated the baptism of the Holy Spirit in those circles that insist on teaching this error. Suppose a church claims that the baptism of water is what happens when a person receives Jesus Christ. What would happen? It would effectively eliminate water baptism, since anyone who confesses Jesus Christ is declared as baptized with water, even when the reality is that it is a separate event.

For centuries, this error and heresy about the baptism of the Holy Spirit has existed in most church and seminary circles. And since the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the thing that confers power from God, many generations of people who claimed to follow Jesus Christ had lived without this power that he commanded his disciples to receive before they were considered equipped to be his witnesses. As a result, this error and heresy has done incalculable damages to the cause of the gospel.

This is a main reason believers and churches have been weak and defeated. And it is a main reason the gospel has not made more progress through the centuries. It is a main reason that religious leaders have resorted to carnal methods, and to cultural and political activism. Faithless doctrines and human traditions are directly responsible. If something is meant to provide salvation, but it is absorbed into another thing so that it disappears, then no one gets saved. And if something is meant to provide power, but it is absorbed into another thing so that it disappears, then no one obtains power.

Refer to this doctrine as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, or even receiving the Holy Spirit. Opponents would protest that this implies those who are saved have never "received" the Holy Spirit in any sense. However, regardless of the role of the Spirit in conversion, it is something else to "receive" the Holy Spirit. This is the way Scripture itself refers to this doctrine and experience, and this is the way Scripture itself distinguishes it from conversion. And so this is how we will proceed. There is no need to compromise on how we refer to it.

The Bible says that if anyone confesses Jesus as Lord and believes in his resurrection, then he is saved. The apostles received the Holy Spirit many days after they acknowledged the resurrection of Christ. The people in Samaria received the Holy Spirit days after they believed the preaching of Philip. They received the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid their hands on the people -- no one receives salvation by the laying on of hands. They were already saved by the preaching of Philip days earlier.

God is sovereign and generous, so that sometimes he would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and cause them to speak in tongues and prophecies the moment they receive Jesus Christ in their hearts. Moreover, some people are simply quick to believe, and so they receive the Holy Spirit in a matter of minutes after they receive Jesus. However, sometimes there is a delay between the two events.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul assumed that a certain group of people were disciples of Jesus, and so he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. He knew that not all those who had received Christ would afterward immediately receive the Holy Spirit, since these are two different things. Paul himself received the Holy Spirit days after he witnessed and confessed the resurrected Christ.

The Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles devote far more attention and emphasis to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural effects that it produces than the Lord's Supper and water baptism. As important as these two things are, they are only mentioned in passing, practically ignored in comparison. I speak relatively, for Jesus said that we should obey all the commands of God. But he also said that even among the commands of God, some matters are more important than others.

In contrast to Scripture, faithless traditions and churches emphasize the Lord's Supper and water baptism rather than receiving the Holy Spirit. This is because they have no faith and no power, and faithless and powerless people tend to embrace traditions that perpetuate their faithlessness and powerlessness, so that they could justify themselves and not embarrass themselves. However, this is not good for them, and not good for the world. This is why Christians are so foolish, so weak and defeated.

We need to wake them up, even if it means we must offend them. And then there are those who are not saved in the first place. They hold on to faithless doctrines and traditions because they have never believed in Jesus. They pretend to believe in Jesus and hide among us. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit involves power that can be experienced and demonstrated. This is difficult for them to pretend, and so it is difficult for them to accept the biblical doctrine. We must speak the truth and expose them, so that we can remove their power to deceive, and so that we might save some of them.

Satan is the one who orchestrated the false doctrine that merges receiving Jesus Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is what confers power to the Christians, and this is the power that can overwhelm all demonic forces. It is said in the Acts of the Apostles that the Christians turned the world upside down. This is the power that did it. And we need this same power if we wish to do this again in our generation.

This is the key to revival in our churches and to the progress of the gospel in the world. Since this doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit has been neglected even among those who claim to believe in it, it is all the more urgent to revive it among believers and to repeat it often. More

people need to know about this, and those who have received the Holy Spirit need to understand what God has given to them.

In the centuries before the coming of Jesus, God would put his Spirit upon chosen men and women to fulfill special roles. They would receive supernatural insights and powers. There were such people as Moses, Samson, David, and Elijah. However, their spiritual operations were limited and sporadic, and the people of God were reliant upon them. Thus they looked forward to a day when all of God's people would be like them, and even better than they were.

Moses did not say, "How I wish all God's people would be saved!" But he said, "How I wish all God's people would be prophets!" Joel did not say, "God would save all kinds of people." But he said, "God would pour out his Spirit on all kinds of people, and give them all kinds of supernatural powers and experiences, and whoever calls on him will be saved." In a number of biblical passages where both salvation by faith and the baptism of the Spirit are mentioned, it is remarkable that this Spirit-baptism receives stronger emphasis than salvation, as if to be saved is only a means to an end.

Preach this to unbelievers along with faith in Jesus Christ, even before they are saved. Tell them, "Believe in Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, so that afterward you can receive the Holy Spirit." The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an optional part of the gospel or even an important part of the gospel -- it is the gospel. It is the good news that God would give his own Spirit to anyone who would follow his Son, and that he would infuse his very self and power into anyone without regard to the person's gender or status. This person takes on God's character and dominion. He receives revelations and performs miracles. He becomes full of theological insights and arguments to speak for the Lord. This is the good news that changes everything.

Paul met some people that he assumed were Christians, and he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. We should also ask this question: "After you believed in Jesus, have you received the Holy Spirit?" Since this remains one of the most neglected issues in the history of the church, we must make it a priority to speak about it. Teach it repeatedly and assertively. Many people will not grasp it the first time you mention it. Tell them, "You have received Jesus Christ by faith, and this means you are saved. But this does not mean you have received the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that his disciples ought to receive the Holy Spirit so that they may obtain power to be his witnesses."

If you have received the Holy Spirit after you believed in Jesus Christ, then you have received the power of God. Although this power makes you a witness for Jesus Christ, it also enhances your personal faith and life. You cannot be full of boldness and power for the gospel ministry without it also affecting your personal confidence and behavior. You cannot have power to heal the sick and speak in tongues and still see your world the same way. Now you have power to live your life as a disciple of Jesus. You have power to heal the sick. You have the power to receive visions and dreams and prophecies from God. You have power to preach with boldness, to make arguments with deep insight, to refute objections with wit and profundity.

This power comes from another world. It transcends human wisdom and ability. It is spiritual and supernatural power. It is far beyond political power. You will see that in groups that have no faith and no power, or in groups where the baptism of the Spirit has fallen into neglect, they will turn to political power as a substitute for God. They will disproportionately emphasize politics and ethics in their preaching. Mark a minister that is constantly talking about politics, who pretends to be insightful and indignant. He has given up on God even as he preaches about God's commands and standards. God never wanted his word to be enforced by the power of man.

If you are certain that you have received the Holy Spirit, do not worry if you have not been experiencing everything that you are entitled to experience. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us the potential to experience and perform spectacular things, but none of us have lived up to this potential. This is partly because of the centuries of neglect on both the individual and corporate level. The church needs to emphasize faith, miracles, and the Holy Spirit more and more. And we need to do this as individuals, in our own time, as well.

Sometimes our lives do not afford us with all the opportunities to see the works of God. If you do not meet many sick people, naturally you are not going to see many people healed by your hands. It does not mean you lack the power to do it. If you have faith, and especially if you have received the Holy Spirit, you can do it. When you do something that demands the power of God, the power of God will appear.

Stir up the gifts and powers of God by prayer, by thinking and talking about these things, by action, by finding opportunities, and you will experience more of these things. Speak in tongues to edify yourself. You will be doing this the most, because you will be doing this even when you are not in ministry or with other people. God is with you. Be happy, and never give up.

THE WONDERFUL LIFE OF FAITH

There is a wonderful life of faith in Jesus Christ. The life of faith is a life of victory and happiness. It is a life of purpose and discovery. It is a life of love and compassion. The life of faith is a life of revelation and experience. It is a life of adventure in the spirit. It is a life of achievement. By faith, we are restored to our original nature, and more than that, we are renewed into the image of the Son of God. The Bible says that we reign in life by Jesus Christ. It is a life of fellowship with God. It is a life of true reason and power. We are able to walk in intelligence and dominance in the likeness of God.

There is salvation in faith. Sin had broken our connection to God, but Jesus Christ came to bring us back to him. He is the Great Shepherd that came to gather his chosen ones back to the Father. This is what we do when we preach the gospel in his name. We call out with our voices and with our words to raise up those who are dead in sin and those who slumber in unrighteousness. Then the Spirit of God injects life into them, and they are reborn as children of God. How should the children of God relate to him? We relate to him in worship, in humility, and in love and truth.

The word of God also teaches that without faith it is impossible to please God. It says that anyone who comes to God must have faith that God is who he says he is and that God is a rewarder of those who seek him. God is a rewarder. True faith must believe that God rewards. If you have faith, you must believe that following God will benefit you. You must believe that seeking God will bring rewards for you. You are not going to reward God. He is going to reward you. This is a basic principle of true faith, and it marks a distinction between revelation and tradition, between true piety and false piety.

There is righteousness in faith. God creates faith in us by his word, and through this faith he credits the righteousness of Christ to our account. This is a perfect righteousness. If we believe that God accepts Jesus Christ as righteous, then we believe that God accepts us as righteous, because we are followers of Jesus. He is our guarantee in the presence of God. As long as Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, we will always have a place in heaven. And if we believe that Satan cannot accuse Jesus of unrighteousness, and that he can never condemn Jesus before God, then we believe that Satan can never condemn us before God.

The righteousness is a gift from God. It is God's own righteousness appearing in us. The faith in our hearts is the evidence that he has chosen us and that he has established a relationship with us. You can trust in this relationship. It was decided before the creation of the world, and secured by the righteousness of Christ himself. It cannot be broken. This brings us to a life of righteousness, not only in status, but also in conduct. We do not have to try and fail and cower. But Jesus has already succeeded, and we have succeeded in him. Now we live out his righteousness in our own lives.

There is freedom in faith. Faith enables us to walk by a different set of rules. The law of decay and death is at work in sinners. They are constantly rotting, constantly dying. They are in

bondage to the world and to the devil. But because we follow Jesus Christ, we walk in the law of spirit and life. We walk in the law of love, grace, and joy. We walk in the law of power, success, and glory.

I declare my faith in God, and Satan loses his hold over me. He cannot control me. He cannot coerce me. But instantly, I have power over him. I say, "I believe that Jesus suffered and died in my place, and I believe that he was raised from the dead for my justification and victory." The moment I say this, the chains fall to the ground. Anxiety dissipates. Depression disappears. Confidence wells up in my soul. Peace floods my heart.

Faith is not a feeling, but faith is something that you can eventually feel, or it is something that will determine what you feel. Faith is not generated by your circumstances, and it is not diminished by your circumstances. It is not a reaction to your circumstances, but it is an effect of God's word in you. By faith, God enables you to dominate your circumstances. Faith reverses the operation of sin in your spirit and your body. You do not have faith only after you are happy, but your faith will cause your spirit to remain happy and in peace. You do not have faith only when your body feels good, but your faith will cause your body to feel good. Faith brings God into your situation, and enables you to rule over it.

Faith comes from God, not from the church. Faith has direct access to God, and it has this access apart from the church. The church is supposed to be a congregation of people who are full of faith, not a gathering of faithless and worthless losers who comfort one another with lies and platitudes. You do not belong to the church, but to Jesus Christ alone. Jesus Christ owns you. He bought you with his own blood. The church does not own you. Nobody in the church died to save you from sin and hell. The church will often misuse the name of Christ to manipulate you and to keep you in bondage to their control. They will force you to comply with their faithless doctrines and human traditions. If you do not have faith, you might succumb and become ensnared to men, just like you were ensnared to the devil before you believed in Christ. But when you have faith, you know that they are imposters. When you have faith, you will throw off their control and follow Jesus. When you confess Christ, they lose their power over you. When you confess Christ, you can damn them to hell and walk free.

Faith sets you free from the sickness mindset. Faith sets you free from the poverty mindset. Faith sets you free from the spirit of defeat. It sets you free from phony piety. Faith inspires you to overturn the false gospel of religious suffering. This false gospel teaches suffering for its own sake, as if suffering is our religion. It tricks people into suffering things that they should never tolerate. It does not teach us to suffer for Jesus, but to suffer things that are the effects of our transgressions, and to suffer things in our circumstances that Jesus already defeated by his death and resurrection. This kind of suffering comes from weakness and unbelief, and it dishonors our Lord. If there is any suffering, let us suffer as witnesses for the gospel of Jesus Christ and as heroes for the kingdom of God. Even then, we can have victory in every situation, because God is with us.

There is power in faith. There is purpose in faith. And there is power to carry out the purpose. In faith, power and purpose are united. In faith, hope finds its fulfillment, and it is not disappointed. Jesus taught his disciples about the power of faith. He said that by faith anyone can speak to a mountain and make it throw itself into the sea. And by faith, anyone can ask for whatever they want in prayer. By faith, we can move mountains. By faith, we can pray and change our lives and change the world. It seems that faith alone already possesses unlimited power, but Jesus said that they would receive even more power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

By faith, we have the power to heal the sick and cast out demons. By faith and by the Spirit of God, we can speak in tongues and prophesy. We have the power to confront dead and perverted religion. This is the kind of religion that adds so much man-made burden to Christians that they are eventually in a worse condition than the unbelievers. But Jesus said that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Faith in God makes life easy and light, not hard and unbearable. Jesus is the answer to all your problems. And by faith, he will take you from dealing with problems to thinking about progress. Then you can have purpose in life. Then you can help other people. Then you have something to offer them. Faith makes you a treasure to God and to humanity.

THESE SIGNS WILL FOLLOW YOU

"And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17-18)

The Christian life is a life of miracles. Anyone who follows Jesus Christ walks in the supernatural. The ministry of miracles is the universal standard minimum for the work of the gospel. Jesus has made it possible for all his people to be prophets. He has enabled us through faith and by his Spirit. This distinguishes us as followers of the true God through faith in Jesus Christ. And it separates us from faithless religious people who pretend to believe in Christ, who even teach about him, but who do not believe in him at all.

When someone denies that we can and we must have a life of miracles, sound the alarm. Even if someone claims to believe in a life of miracles, but if he casts doubt upon it or tries to undermine it a little here and weaken it a little there, be instantly alert. Wake up! Open your eyes! He is not your friend, and he is not a teacher sent from God. Become suspicious and hostile against him. If you do this, you will protect yourself and others, and you will protect the truth of Jesus Christ.

When we walk as followers of Jesus Christ, a variety of miracles accompany our lives. Jesus listed some examples. Paul listed several others in his letters. The Acts of the Apostles and the other parts of Scripture demonstrate additional possibilities. The examples in the Bible inspire us, but they are not meant to limit us. There are no limits, because God is the true miracle-worker, and he has no limits. The Bible says that all things are possible to God, and it also says that all things are possible to the one who believes, the one who has faith.

Still, it is worthwhile to consider specific things that we can perform by faith. You are not limited by your human abilities or talents. You can be more and do more by faith and by the Spirit of God. Train yourself to become miracle-minded. Have a supernatural mindset in both your everyday life and in the ministry. God is with you. He will work miracles for you, to prosper you and to deliver you. And as you take action to advance the gospel, God will give you success, and he will back you up with his power, working signs and wonders, and working in the hearts of the people who hear you.

Teach this to Christians, and frequently remind them. The supernatural cannot be separated from what it means to live for Christ. The supernatural cannot be separated from what it means to preach the gospel. The supernatural cannot be separated from what it means for Christians to gather and worship. We are a supernatural people. We are the only ones who have friendly contact with the divine, and we are the only ones who can live it and show it. This makes us different from those who do not follow Jesus Christ.

People who claim to believe in God but who reject the supernatural for their everyday lives in fact reject the reality of God. They live as if God is only an ethical principle in their minds, and that he makes no concrete, external, and obvious difference before them. Since they believe like this, or rather, since they do not truly believe in God, their religion becomes a gospel of political activism, ethical reform, social work and charity, friendship and courtesy, rather than a gospel that saves the lost, heals the sick, and speaks in tongues.

Jesus said that his witnesses must believe in the power to work miracles. No one should become a missionary unless he plans to heal the sick and cast out demons. No one should establish a church unless he plans to display the supernatural, a mark of the true church. Whenever we initiate a convert, that is, leading him to believe in the truth and confess the Lord Jesus, we must tell him the same thing that Jesus said, that he has been inducted into a life of miracles. And then we must offer him regular reminders to believe in miracles and to work miracles, at least as often as we admonish him to walk in love and integrity.

When the church ordains a minister, how can it charge him with anything less than the commission that Jesus gave all ordinary disciples? The church must declare to him, "You will heal the sick and cast out demons. You will speak in tongues. You will have immunity from snakes and poisons. God shall be with you and work signs and wonders in the name of Jesus." How can it say anything else to him, when this applies to anyone who follows Christ? To ordain a minister with less is to proclaim him as less than a believer and unable to lead anybody. If the church ordains him to lead the people, then the charge is that he must become an instructor and example in healing the sick, casting out demons, and speaking in tongues. And he must send out teams of believers to do these things in the community.

Examine your spiritual diet. Remove preachers and scholars that do not deliberately build up your faith in healing, prophecy, and miracles. Condemn the ones who deny what Jesus promised and commanded. Do not listen to their sermons. Do not read their books. Regard them with contempt and hostility in your heart. Mock them in your conversations. By doing this, you will create a distance between yourself and unbelief, just as they create a distance between them and faith when they mock the word of God about miracles in Christian life and ministry. Safety is ensured when you embrace the true and despise the false. Strength is increased when you honor the power of God and trample the unbelief of men.

Meditate often on the possibilities of God in your life, on what God can do through you. Be inspired by the things that Jesus promised and the things that his early disciples experienced. Consider what Jesus said you are able to do when you follow him by faith. He said that if you will believe, you will see the glory of God.

You can cast out demons. Scripture, even at its very beginning, teaches us about the reality of Satan. He was the one who enticed Eve to sin, and Adam along with her. He was the one who destroyed human innocence. God declared that Satan would be our enemy, but eventually someone born from the human race would crush his head. Satan was also said to be the one who caused the sickness, poverty, and suffering of Job, although he could cause trouble only

under God's power. And then God was said to be the one who reversed the works of Satan and who caused healing and longevity, riches and prosperity, and comfort and happiness for Job.

The Bible never avoided the topic. However, when Jesus arrived, he flung away the curtain entirely. With unprecedented clarity, he exposed Satan as the culprit behind sin, sickness, poverty, and suffering. God is not the thief of our health, money, fulfillment, and happiness. Satan is the thief. He comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. Jesus has come to give us life, even an abundant life. If you do not have an abundant life, it is the will of God for you to have more. Jesus said that it was his mission to make this happen.

During the ministry of Christ, there was a deliberate emphasis in pointing to Satan as the one behind man-made doctrines and traditions. Jesus even declared that those who imposed human commands on the people could not escape the fires of hell, especially those who subverted the commands and promises of God in the process. Now if human doctrines based on the Jewish religion would lead to hell, could human doctrines based on the Christian religion lead to heaven? Of course not!

Just as Jewish religionists had twisted and rejected the commands of Moses in a way that led to damnation, Christian religionists have twisted and rejected the teachings of Christ in a way that also leads to damnation. The Jews rejected heathen religions on the surface, but by their faithless theology, they invented their own heathenism, their own false religion, and their human commands and traditions. In an identical manner, people who claim to be Christians have rejected heathen religions on the surface, but by their faithless theology and their hearts of wickedness and rebellion, they have invented even more variations of heathenism, such as cessationism and other expressions of unbelief and idolatry.

The Bible, especially since the arrival of Christ, reveals that Satan is the one behind idolatry, sickness, poverty, and suffering, so that we must regard these things as our enemies. And it reveals to us that false religion under Jewish and Christian banners are also the works of Satan. Thus we are to regard legalism and ritualism just as we would regard idolatry. And we must reject cessationism just as we would reject cancer, or adultery, or voodooism.

What do you think about Satan? Think of Pharisaism the same way. What do you think about demon worship and human sacrifice? Take the same attitude about cessationism, sacramentalism, and other forms of heathen or faithless theology, such as any teaching that undermines healing, prophecy, prosperity, happiness, and victory by faith in God. They all come from the evil one. The devil wants to lock you into a system of powerless and oppressive religion, so that you will live in bondage all your life. But in Jesus Christ, you are free. As he said, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

Jesus did more than offer us more information about Satan. He also showed us what to do about this enemy. He demonstrated that he had more power than Satan, and that he could overcome demons by force. He said that when a strong man occupies a house, a stronger man can come and defeat him to seize his possessions. Jesus was this stronger man. Then Jesus

demonstrated that when we operate under his banner, we can also confront Satan and overcome all his works. In the name of Jesus, we can heal the sick and cast out demons.

Naturally, we would think that someone is demon-possessed if he screams and thrashes about and attacks people as he foams at the mouth. When someone behaves like this, we confront the demons and command them to leave the person in the name of Jesus. But demons do not cause only insanity and violent behavior. They often afflict individuals in less obvious ways. In the ministry of Jesus, diseases such as stiff joints and spines and deafness and muteness were sometimes attributed to evil spirits. Just as the human spirit is the life of the body, and the body is dead once the spirit departs, an evil spirit can be the life of a sickness or condition. A doctor can prescribe medication or perform surgery to attack the symptoms, but the sickness can return, because it has never left. It is not physical or organic in origin, but spiritual. However, once the spirit or life of the sickness is cast out in the name of Jesus, the sickness dies at the roots, and the symptoms also disappear along with it. Christians have the power to do this.

Jesus said that he cast out demons by the Spirit of God. And he has given us the same Spirit. Casting out demons is a demonstration that the kingdom of God has arrived and that he is extending his domain in the name of the Son of God. It is an official declaration of a takeover. As his agents, we invade this world and fight back the darkness, and then we hold our ground. This is a basic part of living as a Christian in this world.

You can speak in tongues. The Bible says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Holy Spirit enables you to speak in tongues, to speak in languages that you have never learned.

This can be a sign from God when someone around you understands the language that the Spirit gives you. However, it can be a sign even when those around you cannot understand, especially those who claim to follow Christ but who reject speaking in tongues and the powers of the Spirit. As the Bible says, "For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people, to whom he has said, 'This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose' -- but they would not listen."

The Faithless refuse to believe the word of God, so God comes to them with strange sounds and languages. This is the rest, this is the power, this is that which the prophets predicted, that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit upon all people. But they refuse to listen. Therefore, to them the sign of the fulfillment of God's promise also becomes a sign of God's judgment against them.

Speaking in tongues, especially when it is accompanied by the interpretation of tongues, can be a regular part of church gatherings. An intelligent and responsible use of tongues adds energy and inspiration to the people. And when Christians are alone, they ought to speak in tongues as much as possible, because it is a most excellent way to speak to God and build up their spirits. Speaking in tongues is not only a sign, but an enablement that enhances all areas of the Christian life.

You can pick up serpents. We will talk about this together with the next item. You can drink deadly poison. It is ridiculous how this has been twisted both by the Christians who believe it and by those who claim to be Christians but do not believe it. Pseudo-Christians are desperate to prove Jesus wrong, and so they challenge those who believe him to pick up serpents and drink poison. Those who make this challenge expose themselves as children of Satan, because Satan similarly said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread" and "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, since the Scriptures say that he will command his angels concerning you, and they will hold you up in their hands."

The assumption behind the challenge is absurd, and also damning. The word of God says, "If we will confess our sins, then he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We must conclude that the ones who issue this challenge against miracles either do not believe God forgives, in which case they are not Christians, or they would deliberately sin even when they are not tempted in order to prove the promise of God on forgiveness, in which case they are also not Christians. Thus they damn themselves when they say, "If what Jesus said is true, then why don't you pick up snakes? Why don't you drink poison?"

The one who wrote that God is faithful to forgive us also said, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Or as Paul said, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" To say that we should sin in order to prove grace comes either from hardheartedness, which opposes grace, or from licentiousness, which abuses grace. The ones who make such a challenge against God's grace for forgiveness cannot receive grace, and therefore cannot be Christians, and they will burn in hell. What will happen to those who make the same challenge against God's grace for miracles? Are they the defenders of the faith, the pinnacle of orthodoxy? Or are they the sons of rebellion, the children of hell?

The things Jesus said about handling snakes and drinking poison appear on the same list that refers to casting out demons and healing the sick. However, we would not invite demons into people, perhaps by some satanic ritual, in order to prove the word of God by casting out the demons again. And we would not make people sick, perhaps by causing some injury to them or by exposing them to some contagious disease, just so we can demonstrate healing the sick by the name of Jesus. But if someone crosses our path that is possessed by demons, then we cast them out. And if someone is brought to us that is afflicted by sickness, then we call down healing upon them by the name of Jesus.

In the same way, we would not intentionally handle snakes, wishing that they would bite us to let us show off our immunity. And we would not intentionally drink poisons. Nevertheless, in the course of life and ministry, if we run into threats from dangerous beasts and substances, we should indeed claim immunity, deliverance, and healing by faith. Paul was bitten by a snake when he was gathering wood for fire. He was not looking for a snake, but for wood. When he

was bitten, he shook off the snake and remained unharmed. This is the kind of situation Jesus meant. We have also heard of testimonies about Christians who were poisoned by the enemies of the gospel and others who ate foods that they did not know were contaminated, and then they prayed and recovered. But they did not poison themselves on purpose.

Pseudo-Christians expose the truth about themselves when they attack Jesus Christ by challenging those who believe what he said. They must have no part in this business of the gospel ministry. Jesus said that anyone who is not for him is against him. If a person disbelieves what Jesus said, or if he attacks someone who believes what Jesus said, then this person is against Jesus. Satan incited Jesus to put God to the test, and someone who incites Christians to put Jesus to the test is a person who thinks like the devil and speaks like the devil. Jesus said that the children of Abraham would behave like Abraham, but those who behave like the devil are children of the devil. Do not be gullible. Pseudo-Christians present themselves as preachers of truth and defenders of orthodoxy and leaders of the faith, and Christians believe them! But Jesus said we will know them by their fruit. They are servants of Satan.

There are indeed individuals who handle poisonous snakes to prove their faith. Such stupid people are rare. Instead of making the world think that they have faith and that the word of God is true, they make the world think that they have no intelligence and that the word of God is dangerous. If they have faith, they would not do this, because faith agrees with the word of God. There are multitudes of people suffering from various sicknesses and injuries. If they wish to prove their faith, they can lay hands on these people so that they can be healed. If they wish to prove their faith, they ought to do something beneficial instead of creating a problem where there was none.

Faith to work miracles and to experience the supernatural is an ordinary part of following Jesus Christ, but it has become a dividing line between real faith and fake faith, genuine Christians and pseudo Christians, sound gospel reasoning and absurd fallen reasoning. God knew this would happen when he revealed the gospel and its commands and promises. And if the word of God offers us such discernment to see through self-anointed teachers and leaders that are in fact imposters, we know that no one can hide from him. God will hold them accountable for their unbelief and mockery in the judgment.

You can lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Healing the sick is basic and essential to the ministry of the gospel. This refers to healing by miracles, by supernatural power alone. A consistent failure to present the whole truth is also a misrepresentation of the truth, so that there is no true testimony for Christ without healing the sick, and no one is a true witness for Christ without healing the sick. When healing the sick is so basic and essential to the gospel and to what it means to follow Jesus, a person practically becomes an enemy of the gospel just by neglecting to heal the sick, and even more so if he makes any effort to undermine it. Healing the sick is one of the first tests of orthodoxy and one of the marks of a true church.

Jesus placed no restriction on his followers when it comes to healing the sick. If they have anything wrong with them, they will recover. Nothing is too difficult. Nothing is beyond you.

You do not need special gifts or ministries. You do not need special training or ordination. You only need to be a follower of Jesus Christ. You only need to have faith. And you can heal the sick by a mere touch of your hand.

Put a hand on the sick person, and pray. You can command the sickness to leave, or command the body to do what needs to happen for the person to recover. There is no need to cry and yell, or to tighten up your muscles. It is God's power that performs the healing. Your energy does not contribute anything to the miracle. Sometimes you can almost say anything you want, any random thing, and the person would be healed. Sometimes you do not need to say anything. Just touch the person, and the power of God descends and heals the person.

The laying on of hands is only one way to heal the sick. Here we focus on putting your hands on the sick because this is what our text says, but we can heal the sick in the name of Jesus even if we do not touch them. We can pray to God, and God will hear us. We can speak to the sickness, and command it to depart. As Jesus said, anyone who has faith can speak to a mountain and command it to throw itself into the sea. Sometimes you do not need to say anything or do anything. The person comes close to you, and God begins to heal.

Although Jesus promised these signs in the context of the ministry of the gospel, they also benefit us in our personal life. The signs will follow the people -- those who believe -- and not just the ministry. In the name of Jesus, we can resist demons and overcome them when they attack us. It would be absurd to think that we can cast them out of anyone who is oppressed by them, but remain helpless ourselves and become possessed at their whim. We can speak in tongues and edify ourselves, building up our own spirits. By faith, we can claim protection against dangerous beasts and substances. And if we can lay hands on the sick and heal them, we can also receive healing in the name of Jesus. He said that if we have faith, even a mountain must obey what we say.

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." (Galatians 3:8)

The Bible says that God preached the gospel to Abraham, and "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." In other words, what God said to Abraham was called the gospel, and Abraham was counted as righteous because he believed this gospel. What was the gospel according to God? What did God say to him? What did Abraham believe?

Pay attention to the kinds of things that God promised Abraham. I want you to see what God himself describes as gospel. He said to him, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God said he would make a great nation out of Abraham. He said he would make great the name of Abraham. He said he would bless those who blessed Abraham, and curse those who cursed Abraham. The promises were all about Abraham. The gospel would bless Abraham, defend and vindicate Abraham, and exalt the name of Abraham. God did not say that he would honor himself, but that he would honor Abraham. And the Bible says, "Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold." Pseudo-Christians today would call this a false and man-centered message, even if you preach it right out of the Bible. But God called this the gospel. Abraham believed in this gospel of blessing and prosperity, this gospel of wealth and greatness, and he was counted as righteous.

And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, do not call her Sarai, but Sarah will be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Sarah was old and barren, but God said that she would give birth to a son. It was a promise for the healing and renewing of the body. Abraham believed in this gospel of healing, this gospel of health and renewal, and he was counted as righteous.

Then God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham obeyed and was about to kill Isaac when God stopped him. God did not want Abraham to kill his son, but he wanted Abraham to demonstrate the willingness. Later, the Bible explains, "He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." Abraham assumed that Isaac would die, because God had commanded him to sacrifice his son. But he was also confident that Isaac would come back from the dead, because God had promised that he would produce entire nations through Isaac. So even though God stopped Abraham from killing Isaac, Abraham figuratively received Isaac back from the dead, because

that was how the situation played out in his mind. Abraham believed that God would perform a miracle of resurrection for him.

By analogy we would say that he believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He had faith that God could raise the dead, and Jesus said that Abraham prophetically saw into the future to the time of Christ. Nevertheless, the situation here was about Isaac. Abraham believed in the gospel of healing and resurrection for himself, for Sarah, and for his family. He believed that the gospel benefited himself -- the gospel restored himself, prospered himself, and honored himself. The gospel is good news for humanity. It is a message about how God would be good to his people. The gospel is not a message about how God would serve and honor himself while he afflicts and punishes his own people.

Abraham was counted righteous because he believed in the gospel of healing and prosperity, in a gospel of health and wealth, in a gospel of honor and success. It was a gospel of greatness and victory for Abraham, for the man. It was never a gospel of sickness, poverty, and suffering. He was counted righteous because he believed a message about what God would do for him, not what he would do for God. He believed in a gospel of grace, not a gospel of effort and sacrifice. Where is honor for God? God is honored when his people are successful, healthy, and prosperous. God is honored when those who worship him and believe him are happy and thriving.

Scripture says, "He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness." God said that he would make Abraham great, and that he would have a son by Sarah. Despite existing circumstances, Abraham did not waver in believing this gospel of healing and prosperity, and that is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness.

Then it continues, "But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also." And elsewhere it says, "So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." We are to follow Abraham's pattern of faith, who believed that the word of God would be fulfilled regardless of the circumstances he faced. But when it comes to the content of faith, are we to believe something entirely different, even the opposite of what he believed? Are we to believe in a message of sickness, poverty, suffering, and defeat? But the Bible says that what Abraham believed was the gospel. There is only one gospel, and anyone who preaches or believes in another gospel is damned forever.

God said to Abraham, "I will make you rich and great. I will make you into a great nation. I will honor you and bless you. I will curse those who curse you. I will give you a son by your wife, who is old and barren." When Abraham believed this gospel of healing, prosperity, and greatness, he was regarded as righteous by God because of his faith. It was not a faith to suffer, but a faith to not suffer.

Of course, Abraham would have continued to believe in the face of trouble, but that was because he had received a gospel of healing and prosperity and greatness. He remained confident when he faced the imminent death of his own son Isaac, but because he believed in a gospel of healing and prosperity and greatness, he knew that Isaac could not remain dead. If it required God to raise Isaac from the dead in order for the gospel of healing, prosperity, and greatness to be fulfilled, then the miracle was bound to happen. If Abraham had expected sickness and suffering, then he might not have expected Isaac to return from the dead, because disappointment would have been natural and logical. If God had not preached to him a gospel of healing, prosperity, and greatness, Abraham would have had no basis to think that Isaac could never remain dead.

Abraham passed the test. He could pass any test not because he believed in a gospel of suffering, that sickness, poverty, and defeat were to be expected and endured. He believed in the opposite of suffering. He could face trouble and suffering because he was promised the opposite of trouble and suffering. He had faith to overcome trouble. He had faith to live in success and to not suffer. He could face sickness, barrenness, and the decay of old age, because God preached to him a gospel of healing. By faith he refused to suffer sickness, barrenness, and decay. He was healed, and his family was healed along with him. God preached to him a gospel of prosperity. And he was rich with silver and gold. God preached to him a gospel of honor and greatness, and he received his son back from the dead. The gospel of healing and prosperity, of honor and success, resulted in the mightiest spiritual walk.

The Bible says that "we have the same spirit of faith" as those who came before us. What kind of faith are we talking about? Faith for victory. Faith for healing. Faith for prosperity. Faith for success and honor. Faith in God's grace and goodness. Faith to refuse defeat. Faith to refuse suffering. Faith to refuse sickness and poverty. There is no gospel except the gospel that God preached to Abraham. There is no gospel except the gospel of healing, prosperity, and greatness for God's people.

God did not say that Abraham would make God great, but that God would make Abraham great. The good news was for Abraham, not for God himself. God is the answer to all your problems. Some people complain that this is a man-centered message. But God presents himself this way. He does not say that man is the answer to God's problems. The Faithless think that man is the answer to God's problems, but this is a false gospel that leads to damnation. Do not be afraid to desire things from God. Never hesitate to require his help. He does not need your help or service. He calls you to participate, but he is not in trouble. He will solve your trouble. And God is more than the answer to your problems. He can so bless us that there will no longer be problems to solve, but only more and more victories and attainments.

THE BENEFITS OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. (1 Corinthians 14:18)

Speaking in tongues is among the several most effective things that can enhance every aspect of a person's life. It has a place in any prescription for spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, and ecclesiastical improvement, or for any other aspect of life that you can think of. Anyone who seems to overemphasize it, still underemphasizes it. Anyone who seems to overestimate it, still underestimates it.

Speaking in tongues is not an unintelligible outburst, but it is an intelligent and superhuman ability to speak from the deepest part of your being. It is an ability that God gives to a person who has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. After a person has received Jesus Christ, he can also receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus confers his righteousness upon us, but the Spirit confers the miraculous upon us.

Speaking in tongues is one of the effects produced by the infusion of the Holy Spirit, along with such things like enhanced effectiveness in healing the sick and casting out demons. Speaking in tongues is not a nuisance to be managed or suppressed, but it is a priceless treasure made available to God's people by the outpouring of his Spirit.

Any trouble associated with speaking in tongues is never a matter of overemphasis or imbalance, but a problem with correct understanding and application. This is the issue to address in order to make speaking in tongues more accepted and useful for people everywhere. The more teaching and encouragement that we offer on speaking in tongues, the more we contribute to the health of the church and the kingdom of God.

Praying in tongues is an always-present help. In reality, the Holy Spirit is your always-present help, but he has enabled us to speak to God from our spirits. When you are happy and wish to express yourself beyond your conscious capabilities with words, you can speak in tongues and declare the works of God. When your life is calm and uneventful, you can speak in tongues to build up your spirit and make your day interesting. If you fall into a state of fear or confusion, or if you are distressed beyond words, because you can speak in tongues, you can still cry out to God from the deepest part of your being.

Christians should never slide into a state of depression or despair. Always walk in faith, peace, and victory. Do not let anyone tell you that it is normal to feel sad or defeated, even occasionally. It is never normal. It is never acceptable. And it is never necessary. But if we stumble, the Holy Spirit is there. He is with us, and he is in us. The Holy Spirit will never leave you -- speaking in tongues will never leave you. You can always speak in tongues in any situation, and speaking in tongues will always help.

Speaking in tongues is conducive to emotional peace and stability. It is a supernatural help for your mental health. When you speak in tongues, the Holy Spirit can become your therapist. He

can offer you personal counseling. He can offer you insights into your own mind, your thoughts and desires. He can guide you to think through momentous choices in the present and deep traumas in the past, and he can teach you how to face the future. Speaking in tongues is a vital part of spiritual and emotional health.

Speaking in tongues can make an effective use of your intelligence, and it can increase your intelligence. It is a supernatural endowment for intellectual development and breakthrough. If you are a student, speak in tongues before your studies, and during your studies. Once in a while, take a break from your work to walk around your room with your hands raised to God as you speak in tongues. You will find that this enhances your ability to retain and process information.

Speaking in tongues will activate your creativity. As you prepare for a business presentation, speak in tongues. Take time away from your desk and pace the floor, speaking in tongues. Your ideas will become more defined and organized. You might receive flashes of insights that will become pillars of your presentation, or you might receive complete sections of content that will make you look like a genius to the audience. This is a mere spark of the creative wisdom of God working through you. Speaking in tongues can lead to solutions to personal problems, or to business and product ideas, and to new methods and inventions. It will build up your spirit and sharpen your instincts.

Speaking in tongues will make you a better theologian -- it will help you digest and apply the word of God. Speaking in tongues will make you a better apologist -- superior and original arguments will come to your mind. The Holy Spirit will become your teacher, and bring to mind astounding insights and observations. Speaking in tongues will make you a better preacher and evangelist. The Holy Spirit will infuse your mind and work through your thoughts, resulting in surprising and accurate ways of declaring the word of God to the people.

Speaking in tongues maintains your walk in supernatural power. God is faithful and eager to fulfill his word, and so it is easy for miracles to happen as we believe in him and as we perform the works of ministry. Still, there are things that we can do to promote a more effective ministry in the supernatural. Prayer is one of these things, whether we pray with our minds, or whether we pray in tongues from our spirits. We ought to do both. Diligently affirm the supernatural by faith, and speak in tongues always.

Speaking in tongues is not the only thing that will help, but it is one of those things that will bring more power to your preaching, more influence to your writing, and more effectiveness in teaching and evangelism. Speak in tongues and stir up the spiritual and superhuman gifts that are in you by the Spirit of God. Prepare for visions, dreams, and prophecies. Expect signs and wonders. Jump-start your imagination.

Speaking in tongues is itself a supernatural event. Because the Spirit of God is in you, this supernatural power has become a native ability. It might feel so natural that you forget it is a

superhuman ability. Let it be a reminder that you are now connected with the supernatural realm of God by his Spirit and by your faith in him.

Every aspect of your life and ministry can be enhanced by speaking in tongues. We have considered only several ideas that come to mind. You might discover other possibilities and experiences when you speak in tongues in the context of your own life and calling. Every day, dedicate time to speak in tongues for as many minutes and hours as you can while you are undistracted and not doing other things. Then speak in tongues throughout the day even while you are doing other things. Speak in tongues as much as possible, and as often as possible.

ALWAYS READY TO ATTACK

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Always be ready to attack the ones who disagree with your faith for miracles. Demand a defense for their unbelief and cynicism. Destroy their excuses. Use their answers as additional evidence against them. And do this with hostility and contempt. Follow the example of Jesus. Sanctify his attitude and behavior as the standard. He antagonized the Faithless on purpose. His sermons provoked them by design. Despise and rebuke unbelief. Exhibit no gentleness and no respect for faithless religious tradition.

The Faithless will use Scripture to manipulate you. They cannot stand up against you in a direct and all-out clash, and so they wish to trick you into treating them with gentleness and respect, in order to suppress the condemnation that you can unleash against them. They are afraid of the truth. Scripture refers to answering with gentleness and respect only when you are under interrogation by those in official authority, those who have the power to punish and to kill, such as emperors and judges, and government agents.

When Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles answered those in authority, they were often still astonishingly harsh and unrestrained by our cultural standards. Sometimes they rebuked and cursed those who demanded answers from them. Scripture teaches gentleness relative to the cultural standards of its own time, when religious disagreements often resulted in violence. If the culture is very soft, even too soft, then the teaching of Scripture has been more than satisfied. If you go even softer, no one has to care about what you say. There will be no sense of obligation or urgency to the truth. And this is why the Faithless require gentleness and respect from you.

In many areas of the world, Christian influences have reduced religious arguments to gentle and respectful conversations compared to the standards of the past, so that our words are often so soft and indirect that they are easy to ignore. Religious unbelief and tradition ought to be attacked with all hostility, although we never resort to violence against those who disobey the gospel. But remember Jesus himself made whips and violently turned over tables and drove out the merchants from the temple. So never hesitate to rebuke and embarrass those who affirm unbelief. Don't be afraid that you might be going too far. It is almost certain that you are never harsh enough.

Among the Faithless are non-Christians and pseudo-Christians. The pseudo-Christians affirm a Christianized version of pagan religion or philosophy, such as Catholicism, Mormonism, and cessationism. These people will often demand that you speak to them in polite tones and words. They would demand this even as they attempt to interrogate you about your own beliefs. This is a trick. Do not comply. Throw off all restraints.

They wish to undermine you and at the same time prevent you from fighting back. They wish to weaken your approach so that they can withstand the truth for longer. Do not fall into their trap. Attack them, rebuke them, expose them and embarrass them with all your strength and eloquence. God has given you the victory. Go on the offensive. Attack them, and keep on attacking. Chase after the Faithless and run them off the cliff.

Jesus was always ready to attack unbelief and tradition, especially when it comes to the ministry of healing and miracles. He belittled their intelligence and achievements before thousands of listeners. He cursed them and told degrading stories about them. If we follow him, and if we sanctify him in our hearts, then we will also attack everyone who questions the ministry of miracles or who hardens his heart against healing the sick and casting out demons. Do not be afraid. Do not be ashamed. They are the ones in the wrong. They are sinners against God and humanity. They are the ones who ought to cower, who ought to answer for their doctrines and their actions. They are the ones who need a defense, and their advocate is Satan. Do not sin against God by showing mercy to the devil and his servants. If we run forward to attack them, God will crush them under our feet.

BETTER THAN JOB

The LORD restored Job's prosperity and gave him twice as much as he had before....The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first....Then he died, an old man who had lived a long, full life. (Job 42:10, 12, 17)

Job began with health and wealth. Then he was struck by setbacks and tragedies. Scripture exposed the force behind his suffering -- it was a satanic attack. But afterward God restored him with healing and prosperity, and blessed him with much more wealth and longevity. Although faithless religion interprets his life as a story of suffering, in reality his story started with health and wealth, and ended with even more health and wealth.

His story is a message of healing and prosperity. Although he had fallen to great depths of suffering, he persevered with God, and God restored his prosperity and multiplied his wealth, and gave him a long life to enjoy it. We take inspiration from this. From the story of Job, we learn that even when someone had no known covenant with God, and no known promise of healing and prosperity, God still insisted on granting him healing and prosperity, as long as the man remained with God.

Our difference with Job is that we have a contract with God that allows us to refuse the suffering that happened to Job, and that enables us to dominate and cast out Satan in the name of Jesus. Satan could appear before the throne of God to obtain permission before he inflicted Job with diseases and tragedies. We are in a different and superior position compared to Job. The Bible says that we are now seated together with Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, and because we are in Christ, all things are under our feet.

Now when Satan approaches the throne of heaven, demanding permission to attack us, we are the ones on the throne! Christ is on the throne, and we are seated there in him. Where Christ is, there we are. We are seated in the same position as Christ. This is what it means to follow him. This is what it means to have him as our head. As Satan appears before us, do we grant him permission to afflict us like he afflicted Job? We have the authority to refuse. But those who are deceived by faithless religion would surrender to the "will of God" and accept suffering, when it is in fact the will of Satan.

In Christ, we are better than Job, and stronger than Satan. Just as Satan could do nothing to Job without God's permission, he can do nothing to us without our permission. Do we deny the sovereignty of God? But God is the one who seated us at his own right hand in Christ. Thus anyone who denies that Satan needs our permission to afflict us is the one who denies the sovereignty of God and renounces the gospel of Christ.

The Bible says, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." If Satan is not stronger than Christ, then he is not stronger than us. Satan cannot rise higher than the right hand of God. Either we say that Satan is higher than the throne of God, in which case Satan would be the true God, or we must say that Satan is not

higher than the throne of God, and since we are seated together with Christ, then Satan himself is under our feet. If Job's relationship with God led to healing and prosperity, and long life, our relationship with God in Christ must lead to far greater healing and prosperity for each of his followers, and healing and prosperity for all nations.

CAST AWAY YOUR CARES

**Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never allow the righteous to fall.
(Psalms 55:22)**

The Faithless often characterize every aspect of their religion as "God-centered." They have God-centered theology, God-centered preaching, God-centered counseling. Everything that they do, they claim, is God-centered or Christ-centered. God-centeredness sounds good, but what they call God-centeredness often results in the opposite of what the Bible teaches. In reality, the Faithless are the least God-centered people among those who call themselves Christians. Some of them are the most despicable, unbelieving, and self-centered people. The truly God-centered people do not often brag about it. They simply believe and live a God-centered faith.

Many verses in the Bible are explicitly and emphatically about you. If you insist that those verses are not about you, then you are rejecting God and denying his authority. How is that God-centered? But this evil is at the root of faithless theology. If the Bible talks about you, but you insist that it is talking about God or Christ, and not about you at all, then your theology is in fact centered on a false God -- you have made yourself the false God who defines the truth regardless of what the God of Scripture says. This is a main characteristic of what the Faithless claim to be God-centered theology or interpretation. Their God is not the God of the Bible, but they have made themselves God, and they have set up a religion called God-centeredness.

Here the Bible tells you to cast your cares -- all your worries, all your burdens -- upon God. It does not say to let God cast all his burdens upon you. It does not mention anything about God's concerns, but only your concerns. Then, the verse says, God will sustain you. It does not say that you will sustain God or his kingdom, but he will sustain you. It is all about how he will help you. Never be ashamed to insist on God's help and favor. God wants you to cast all your cares upon him. God wants to sustain you and help you. God wants to bless you with healing and prosperity, and with spiritual fruit and power, and to rescue you from your troubles. Peter wrote, "Cast all your cares on him, because he cares about you." Of course we care about God, but Peter's statement is on how God cares about you. If we distort the verse to say that it is not about us, but about God or Christ, then we are not truly God-centered, because we would ignore whatever God says to assert our own theology about him.

God-centered theology would acknowledge that God cares about me, because that is what God says about himself. He cares for me more than I can ever care for him. He wants me to know it and admit it. When I know it and admit it, this is God-centered theology, because it accepts what God says about himself, that he is a God who cares for me, that he is a God who gives me salvation, healing, prosperity, and all kinds of blessings and miracles. If I am self-centered, then I would assert my opinion about God and about true religion regardless of what God says about himself. I would say how much I must care about God, how much it would cost me to follow him, and how much suffering I must endure for him. I would say that I must endure while he

might not lift a finger to relieve my suffering except to give me the grace to endure. This is false religion. It is self-worship.

On the other hand, if I am God-centered, I would think of him as the point of reference for everything. I would defer to what he says about himself in everything, first of all in matters of true faith and worship. When I do this, I would acknowledge that he cares for me, that he has made himself the answer to all my problems and the fulfillment of all my hopes and desires. And I would preach this to people. I would proclaim to everyone that God is good, that God cares, and that he heals and prospers those who come to him in faith. God solves all your problems. God fulfills all your desires. You don't solve his problems. You don't fulfill his desires. You are not his God. He is your God. God is self-sufficient.

The Faithless reverse this, and they make themselves God instead. They want to become God to God himself! Should God fall on his knees and worship them, and thank them for their service and sacrifice? It is as if their idea of God-centered religion is to say, "God casts all his cares upon you, because you care about him, and he cares only about himself." This is the most self-centered and anti-Christian way of thinking, but this is the outcome of their theology. The Faithless would say, "God is not here to solve your problems and to make you happy." But God says he is! God says he is here to solve your problems and to make you happy. So those who follow faithless theology have to solve their own problems as well as God's problems, and they have to make themselves happy, if that is even permitted.

Cast out every trace of faithless religion from your mind. Let God set you free to believe and accept his love and care. Let God be God. Cast away your worries. Pray about everything. Don't assume that anything is unworthy of his attention. Dare to affirm what God says about himself. Say, "God is the answer to all my problems. God will fulfill all my hopes and desires."

CHAINS FALL OFF

Pray in faith. Speak with confidence. Choose positive words. Do not use your words to describe the problems endlessly. Use your words to affirm God's power. Speak words of power and success. Speak words of healing and prosperity. Speak words of love and joy. Speak words of favor and honor.

Satan and the Faithless want to tie you up with their lies, but God has given you liberty in Jesus Christ. You owe nothing to Satan. You owe nothing to the Faithless. They are under the curse of God. Come out from among them! Confess your freedom, and the chains will fall off.

Contradict sickness. Speak words of healing, and the chains of sickness will fall off. Contradict poverty. Speak words of prosperity, and the chains of poverty will fall off. Contradict bitterness and resentment. Speak words of love, hope, and joy, and the chains of hatred and despair will fall off. Contradict the failure mindset. Speak words of success, and the chains of defeat will break and fall to your feet.

There are the chains of faithless theology and tradition. There are the chains of church traditions, and doctrines that historic and orthodox men invented in order to supplant the word of God. Speak words that contradict them. Speak words that condemn them. Speak words that mock them. Speak words that proclaim God's commands and promises. Speak words that affirm faith and power, words that affirm signs and wonders.

I will renounce the religion of man, no matter how historic or orthodox it is, and no matter how respectable it is to faithless people. I will take responsibility for my own life and my own faith. I will follow Jesus Christ and walk forward with God.

GOD SAYS "YES"

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you — Silvanus, Timothy, and I — did not become "Yes and no." Rather, in him it is always "Yes." For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in him. And so through him we also say "Amen" to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 1:19-20)

God says "Yes" to his own promises in Christ, and through Christ we also say "Yes" to God's promises. Jesus is God's "Yes" to us, and Jesus, as we affirm our faith in him, is our "Yes" to God. When we take hold of a promise from God, or as we pray for something that we want, we never have to say, "Grant this, if it is your will." We never have to think, God might or might not answer. We never have to think, he will give us what we ask, if it is his will.

Since God himself declares that Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses, it makes no sense to think that "I will be healed, if it is God's will." It is too late for that. It makes no sense to take a promise from God and tell him that we receive it, and then think, "We will get it, if it is his will." He already made the promise, and in Christ he already said "Yes" to his own promise.

The issue is not whether God says "Yes" to his own promise, but whether we say "Amen" to his promise. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preach, is not "Yes and no." Imagine preaching Christ to the unbelievers and say, "Behold Jesus Christ who was crucified for the sins of the world. Believe in him and you shall be saved, or you might not be saved." That would be absurd. It would not be the gospel.

So when we consider all the other things that God offers us in Christ, such as answers to prayer, miracles of healing and deliverance, and blessings of prosperity and protection, why do we say "Yes and no"? Why would anyone think that God would say "Yes" or "No," depending on his will in each instance? How many instances of Christ are there? There is only one Christ, and there is only "Yes" in him.

Here is God's "Yes" -- "Yes" to his own promises, "Yes" to our claims and desires. Now where is our "Amen"? God is saying "Yes." We are the only ones saying "Yes and no." When we also say "Yes," then the promises are fulfilled in our lives. When we say "Yes," then the miracles happen in our experience.

Many Christians read a promise from God and wonder, "Will God do it? What will he decide this time?" as if God will sometimes break his own promise. This is what theology has done -- it is what bad theology has done, and it seems that almost all theology in history has been bad theology. This is why most people are suspicious of theology. Some of them think that theology in any form represents disbelief toward God's word. It is hard to blame them.

We must hate the kind of theology that portrays Christ as "Yes and no" rather than a simple "Yes" from God. The only good kind of theology, and the only true kind of theology, is the kind

that takes Jesus Christ as God's "Yes" to us. Christ is always a "Yes" and only a "Yes" from God. He has said "Yes" to all of his promises, and his "Yes" does not turn into a "No."

In Christ, God has said "Yes" to his own promises of salvation and forgiveness. He has said "Yes" to his promises of healing and prophecy, speaking in tongues, and signs and wonders. He has said "Yes" to his promises of prosperity and success, of favor and honor. He has said "Yes" to his promises of protection and immunity from foolish and needless suffering.

The faith that is counted as righteousness will never say "Who will bring Christ down to die for me?" each time it needs healing. The faith that is counted as righteousness will never say "Who will bring Christ back from the dead?" each time it needs forgiveness. These things have already happened. Christ came to earth and suffered in our place, and then he rose from the dead and brought us with him. The theology that wonders what God will decide each time it needs something is not the faith that is counted as righteousness. This kind of faith, which is in fact unbelief, cannot be counted as righteousness. Therefore, there is no salvation in it. This kind of faith, or faithlessness, is doomed to burn in hell.

But what does faith say? According to Scripture, the faith that is counted as righteousness says, "The word of God is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart." Jesus Christ is God's permanent "Yes" to us. Now we are to believe his word in our hearts and confess it with our mouths. We are to say "Yes" back to God. That is when salvation happens. That is when healing happens. That is when prosperity happens. That is when protection happens. That is when the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens.

If we say "No" or "Yes and no," then there is no faith. Refuse to allow Satan and the Faithless to smuggle a "No" to God in your thinking, in your doctrine, in your prayer or daily speech. In the name of God, cast them out into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. They are anti-Christ. Cast them out of your life. Cast them out of your family and your church, so that you may live in the power and liberty of God's "Yes" to you. In Christ, God always says "Yes" to you. Through Christ, let us always say "Yes" to God.

THE WEAKNESS OF HUMAN WISDOM

Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our "foolish" preaching to save those who believe....The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they sound foolish to him, for only a spiritual person can understand spiritual things. The spiritual person evaluates all things, but he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. (1 Corinthians 1:21, 2:14-15)

What the world calls an educated person is not someone who knows the truth. He is not someone who has more knowledge. He is only someone who has been brainwashed by other men like him. These are men who think that they have discovered truth. They have convinced themselves that they possess wisdom and knowledge.

God sees to it that humans can never find God by their own ability and intelligence. But since God is the foundational truth, the ultimate truth, and all truth, this means that men can never discover truth by their own power.

In fact, the more they invest their energies and resources into the discovery of truth, the more their inability and prejudice veer them away from the truth. The end result is a system of opinion that has very little contact with reality. And of course, there can be no salvation in such a system. It leads to hell and eternal suffering.

True knowledge will not introduce doubt toward God. The denial of God is ignorant. It is a delusion. True intelligence will not introduce doubt toward the supernatural. Both atheism and cessationism are stupid. Both of these pagan philosophies reject Jesus Christ as he explained himself in revelation and in history.

Skepticism toward God from any perspective -- whether in the form of atheism, satanism, or cessationism -- is not a mark of wisdom, but it is ultimate foolishness that throws men into the destructive spiral of generation after generation of delusional idiots convincing themselves that they are enlightened.

The most delusional and hypocritical form of unbelief is cessationism and other versions of faithless religion. Faithless pseudo-Christians are the most hard-hearted, because they believe that they are the most loyal and precise followers of Jesus Christ, when they are often no better than religious atheists and satanists. Christianity is their culture, not their faith. Of course, a mere culture never saves anyone.

EVERYONE WHO ASKS, RECEIVES

For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:8)

Counterfeit Christian theology teaches that prayer is not about asking things, but it is about developing ourselves. This is what many pagan religions teach. It is because they have no God and they cannot expect to get anything. The Faithless are in fact culturally-Christian pagans. They adopt Christian culture but they cannot experience Christian reality, and so they must invent a theology to accommodate this.

On the other hand, Jesus taught that prayer is about getting things from God. Of course we develop ourselves when we pray, but this does not exclude constantly asking God for things. In fact, we develop ourselves by asking God for things, for in asking God for things, we exercise our faith and dependence on God.

And of course we fellowship with God when we pray, but this does not exclude constantly asking God for things. In fact, we fellowship with God by asking him for things, for in asking God for things, we acknowledge that he is God, that he is our Father, that he is able to do all things, and that he is the source of all gifts and miracles. How is that not fellowship? Do we fellowship with God only when we talk to him like a friend and pretend that he is not God? Or do we fellowship with God only when we praise him with our words, but then turn away from him to solve our problems and develop our plans by our own wisdom and effort? That is not fellowship, but arrogance and apostasy. A person who is in fellowship with God will constantly ask him for things.

Jesus placed a different emphasis on prayer than the faithless and the religious. Prayer is not only about developing ourselves or fellowship with God, but it is about getting things from God. And he placed no restrictions on what we ask. He never said that we cannot ask for physical and material things. He never said that we must only pray for other people. He never said that we can only pray about ministry or the kingdom of God, as if God needs us to pray for him.

Jesus knew the kinds of things that most of his hearers wanted. They were not professional religionists. Many of these people indeed cared about God, salvation, and spiritual things. But they would no less diligently ask for healing, prosperity, things that would make them happy and successful, and for God to solve their problems and improve their lives. Jesus knew this and still said, "Everyone who asks, receives."

This was his teaching on prayer: "You ask, you get." Who teaches this way today? Preachers warn people about abuse more than they teach about what Jesus said. But the things they call abuse are often the things that Jesus wanted the people to ask for. He did not need to investigate each individual before he made broad statements about prayer. He knew what they wanted and he told them to ask. He did not say that God will give them what they ask only if it

is his will. And he made a point of insisting that God will not decide to give them something else, but that God will give them the very thing that they ask.

God is pleased when we ask him for things and get things from him. He is pleased when we pray for ourselves. He is pleased when we pray for our own success, healing, and prosperity. He is please when we pray for our happiness and our future. And of course, he is also pleased when we pray for other people, for their healing and prosperity, for their salvation and their ministry. When we ask God for things, we are treating him as God and as Father. When we ask God for things, we acknowledge that he is the one who makes things happen, that he is the source of our existence and happiness. And God will glorify himself by showing the world how he rescues and blesses his people.

EVANGELISM AND MIRACLES

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-8)

Here is an example of ordinary evangelism. Any Christian can do it. The Bible portrays the ministry of preaching accompanied by miracles as the standard. This is to be the norm whether we are preaching to sinners or whether we are preaching to believers.

Paul was speaking to believers when a man in his audience fell from a third floor window and was found dead. Paul put his arms around him and said, "Don't be alarmed. His life is in him." And the man was alive again. Paul wrote to believers stating that they were to expect supernatural manifestations in every gathering.

Any Christian can partner with God in the supernatural when he is speaking to sinners in the context of evangelism, and also when he is speaking to believers in order to teach and to edify them, or when he is worshiping God along with them. To follow Christ is to follow him into the realm of God, into a dimension of supernatural abilities and experiences.

This is such an integral part of following Jesus Christ that to forget it would be like forgetting what he was called, and to reject it would be rejecting what he taught and represented. And indeed the historic church has forgotten him and rejected him. The Faithless have made their own way. It is the way of unbelief, a culture of religion without power and reality.

Until Christians restore the supernatural to the mainstream, so that it becomes more central and pervasive than almost everything else in their lives, they condemn themselves when they discuss how to change the world with education and politics. They expose themselves as those who have rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. They have made a whole new religion out of rejecting him, and they are proud of it.

Counterfeit Christians complain that many people have strayed from "biblical evangelism," but they are the ones who have rejected the biblical approach. They complain about altar calls, the sinner's prayer, making decisions for Christ, and various practices and expressions used in evangelism by those who are vastly more effective. Yet they themselves stand as mortal enemies against the method of Jesus and his disciples.

Their criticisms come from unbelief and jealousy. Although the people they persecute often need to refine their theology and method, these critics are not in a position to speak, because their own theology and method make them look like unbelievers. They tout their lack of faith and lack of success as orthodoxy, when it is because there is no God in their lives – they have kicked him out. God has left them to die in their unbelief and godless religion. The Faithless

cannot have a genuine ministry of the gospel, and so they make a ministry out of persecuting those who have a genuine ministry. They discredit other people's success, because it is all they can do.

Jesus had miracles and gained a huge following. The Faithless at that time called him a deceiver and blasphemer. When the followers of Jesus work miracles and gather large crowds today, the modern Faithless exhibit the same behavior as their spiritual ancestors. They criticize and persecute, and they set themselves up as champions of orthodoxy – exactly like the people who attacked and murdered Jesus.

Satan has infiltrated the Christian world with an army of faithless imposters. These people present themselves as the best of Christians, the most loyal and knowledgeable followers of Jesus. They are able to deceive gullible believers and those who are weak in faith and holiness, whose hearts lean toward wickedness. They are attracted to a system of religion that profess Jesus Christ but reject his power and method of living and of ministry. They tend to take the Faithless seriously and accept their indoctrination of unbelief and counterfeit orthodoxy.

Satan can have no such success among the people of faith. Scripture is clear about the doctrine and method of Jesus and his followers. This is a system of faith that affirms miracles for all kinds of ministries and all kinds of occasions. It is impossible to keep contradicting Jesus, but insist that it is a mere difference of opinion among his followers, or even insist that the way of Jesus has become outdated and incorrect. This is the dividing line between true and false believers, true and false ministries, true and false preaching, and true and false evangelism.

FAITH AND FEELING

We must not let feeling affect faith, but let faith affect feeling. We have faith regardless of how we feel, but when we have faith, we will eventually feel what we believe.

Our faith makes our entire being feel full of life and love. It makes us feel happy, not depressed. We feel this way regardless of what happens, because we have faith, and faith determines how we feel. And we know our faith will also determine what happens.

Because we have faith, we are full of hope and full of purpose. We do not wait for something good to happen before we feel this way, and if something bad happens, we do not suddenly feel the opposite. But because we have faith, we feel good, and good things will happen.

The Faithless affirm a counterfeit version of faith. This is because they have no faith, and in order to hide this fact, they must invent a different definition of faith, so that they can take the false religion that they have and call it faith.

Since they are faithless, they cannot have something that only those who have faith can possess. They must take something that even atheists and satanists can have, and call that faith instead, so that they can insist that they also have faith.

And so the Faithless replace true faith with acceptance and endurance. To them, faith is something that accepts circumstances and endures suffering. You cannot expect faith to change anything except your own attitude toward your environment. This is the same kind of faith that the pagans teach.

Since the pagans have no God in their lives, their faith cannot change anything except their own attitude and perspective. Faithless Christianity, or counterfeit Christianity, has adopted this pagan view of faith and made it their orthodoxy.

It is possible to accept your environment and endure your circumstances, but have no faith at all. If someone merely accepts and endures his environment without expecting God to change this environment for him, or to enable him to overcome his circumstances, then this is not faith.

Faith does not just accept and endure. Faith dominates the environment and overcomes circumstances. Faith can throw a mountain out of the way. Faith cares nothing about the natural order and commands a tree to be planted in the sea. Faith is the confidence of God. The result of faith is victory, not merely a moral victory, but a spiritual and material victory.

FAITH AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

It is possible to enter into the operation of a spiritual gift by faith. For example, the Bible says that if there is no interpretation of tongues, a person can pray to operate in the interpretation of tongues. Nevertheless, faith works in line with the word of God. What is contrary to the word of God cannot be of faith. The gifts of the Spirit are available to someone who has been baptized or filled with the Spirit, and not to someone who has only been born again or justified by faith. To operate in the gifts of the Spirit, he needs to also receive the Holy Spirit.

A person who has only been reborn or justified can obtain anything that has been promised to faith and the name of Jesus. For example, any Christian is able to heal the sick by faith in the name of Jesus, but someone who does not have the baptism of the Spirit would not operate in the gifts of healing. That is, he can heal the sick by faith and by the name of Jesus, but not by the gifts of the Spirit. But the baptism of the Spirit is itself promised to faith, so any Christian can obtain it by faith, and then this would be the door to enter into the gifts of the Spirit. A Christian can heal the sick by faith before he receives the Holy Spirit, but after he receives the Holy Spirit, he can also heal the sick by the gifts of the Spirit.

A gift that functions as a regular and permanent ministry is different from working miracles by faith or by isolated manifestations of the Spirit. The Bible does not only refer to spiritual gifts as such, but it also refers to the gifts as ministries. It teaches that each person has his place in the body of Christ, and that in a corporate situation, we need one another. It says that these ministries are given by the Spirit "as he wills," and that God has arranged each person in the body "as he chose."

If you have received the Holy Spirit, you can do the things that an apostle can do by your faith, but you cannot become an apostle or compel God to give you a certain ministry by your faith. Through faith and diligence, you can improve your performance and effectiveness in teaching, in evangelism, in healing, and in any function that a Christian is supposed to do, but you cannot become a teacher or evangelist by faith and diligence alone. You can perform any function by faith because you are a Christian, but you cannot decide your own ministry by faith, because God is the one who decides your place in the body of Christ.

If you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, then you have the potential to receive visions and dreams, because this is promised to you. You can indeed enter into these experiences by faith. However, unlike healing, where the need and the solution are obvious, you cannot force God to say something when there is nothing to say, or if it is not the right time to say it, or if you are not the right person to receive the information.

When a child died, the mother came to Elisha, and Elisha said that the Lord had not shown him the problem. He did not find out until he entered the room where the dead child was. Even with Elisha's advanced prophetic ministry, God could withhold information from him. You can enter into the prophetic in a general sense by faith, and then you will see and hear when there is something for you to receive.

There are false teachers that claim Christians can "activate" the prophetic so that they can operate on demand, but their methods are identical to occult techniques. The results they obtain might not come from God, but might come from demons, or from the perception of the human spirit. The outcome is a curse rather than a blessing.

People are attracted to this kind of doctrine for two reasons. First, they suffer from feeling lost in this world. They need direction and assurance. Second, they desire to feel spiritual and to be admired as spiritual. The solution is to establish our lives and thoughts on the word of God, and learn who we are to God and to the world because of our faith in Jesus Christ. This develops direction and assurance in us. And it develops confidence in our place before God.

FAITH AND UNDERSTANDING

Aware of this, Jesus said, "You of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you still not understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?" (Matthew 16:8-9)

Jesus warned his disciples about the yeast of the religious leaders and scholars. He referred to their doctrines, but the disciples thought he said this because they had forgotten to bring bread with them. Jesus rebuked them and indicated that the misunderstanding occurred because of their lack of faith. He had miraculously multiplied food to feed thousands of people, and the leftovers were more than what they started with. If they had faith, the disciples would have known that food was never a problem with Jesus, so they would have excluded the lack of bread as a possible interpretation of what Jesus said about the yeast of the religious leaders and scholars.

There is a tendency to claim that misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Scripture are due to a lack of education or training, or to an ignorance of theological systems and histories, or biblical languages and interpretive methods. Faith is rarely, if ever, mentioned by theological teachers as a factor in understanding biblical statements and doctrines. But Scripture makes it a defining factor. Technical knowledge can serve faith, but it cannot supplant or replace faith. Scholarly tools and methods are useful only after faith is present. Without faith, they are worse than useless, because a faithless scholar will take God's revelation and drive more forcefully toward a wrong direction than someone without specialized training. The worst of the worst are usually religious scholars, or those who think they are scholars.

As Isaiah said, "Lord, who has believed our message?" and "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they would not see with their eyes or understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them." The religious leaders and scholars that avoid making faith a defining factor in understanding often fall under this condemnation. They ordain one another as gatekeepers of Christian doctrines and biblical interpretation, but they are the ones who fail to understand anything, because they approach Scripture with faithless assumptions. All their systems and methods, all their degrees and credentials, cannot make them understand. They lecture others, but they themselves cannot repent and be saved.

Jesus said that the Pharisees did not believe Moses, and so they also could not believe Jesus, because Jesus was the one that Moses predicted. Counterfeit Christians do not believe Jesus, and so they also cannot believe me, because I am the kind of disciple that Jesus described. Jesus himself walked with some disciples who were puzzled about what happened to Jesus after his crucifixion, although Jesus explained it multiple times before his death. So Jesus rebuked them and said that they were slow to believe the prophets. Faith was the issue, not tools and methods. Unbelief prevents a person from grasping the most simple and direct statements from Scripture. We see this in theological writings constantly, whether by the most revered historic theologians or the most celebrated modern scholars. They often appear worse than illiterate -- completely broken in their stupid minds -- because they have no faith.

Unbelief rules out God's way of thinking from the start. What God's word says is assumed to be impossible. This assumption of unbelief is so strong that the reader often fails to see the true meaning as a possibility before excluding it. The true and obvious meaning does not even cross his mind. Faith is foolishness to the Faithless, and the spiritual is unintelligible to the unspiritual. The result is that the Faithless are the most stupid things on the face of the earth, because they cannot even understand plain words and sentences.

Cessationism is a prime example. The Faithless cannot see Jesus as a miracle worker and healer except in a book or in distant history. The mere possibility that God would heal the sick according to our faith is a threat to how the Faithless are perceived by themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others. This is because they have no faith, so that if God were to answer faith, he would never answer them, but he would answer thousands of others who have faith. Healing is only one example, but God would not answer them on every single item that he promised to faith, while he answers thousands of others because they have faith. This makes it impossible for the Faithless to maintain their religious authority and reputation.

The Faithless consider themselves superior Christians, the best of the best, and they despise the people that they consider less educated but who believe the word of God about signs and wonders, healing the sick, and prosperity and success. But because faith is the dividing line between genuine scholars and counterfeit scholars, and between the spiritual and unspiritual, the Faithless are exposed.

Therefore, they must insist that the things promised to faith have ceased. They cannot believe God as he is. But of course God is only as he is. He is not something else, and anything else is not him. This means that whatever the Faithless believes is not really God. In other words, they cannot believe in God, but they can only pretend. To maintain their self-perception, that they are wise scholars, and to maintain their control over religious people and the perception that they are holy leaders, they must exterminate the doctrines of faith. They must sometimes even condemn the works of the Spirit and call them the works of demons, and thus commit the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Many of them have done this. They cannot be forgiven, and they will burn in hell.

When the Faithless read about a healing miracle in the Bible, they might confess that it happened in history, but their application would turn the passage into a metaphor on how Jesus heals our soul. However, there are other passages in the Bible that directly teaches about how Jesus heals our soul. If the Bible also wishes to teach us about how Jesus heals our bodies, what would it take for us to admit it? Regardless of what the Bible says about receiving healing by faith, the Faithless refuse to accept it, because their scholarship begins from unbelief. Regardless of what a passage says, the Faithless always redirect it to address only what they can accept. This is because their religion does not worship God or follow Jesus at all, but their God is Faithless, and they follow only unbelief and tradition.

When the Faithless read about the teaching of faith in the Bible, they turn it into a lesson on determination and endurance. However, Jesus said that faith can throw a mountain out of the way, and it can uproot a tree and replant it into the sea. This is not metaphorical, because when Jesus offered this teaching, he cursed a physical tree and it withered from the roots. He said that if we have faith, we can do the same things that he did, and we can do even greater things. Because the Faithless has no faith, they cannot walk in the power that true faith possesses. To them, faith can only mean an attitude that enables them to suffer problems and not solve them.

The most important factor to understanding the Bible is faith. If you assume that resurrection cannot happen, then when the Bible refers to resurrection, you will think that it is a metaphor. If you assume that God does not prosper his people with riches, then when the Bible promises prosperity, you will make it into a metaphor. If you assume that God does not heal the sick, you will turn healing into a metaphor. Everything that the Bible says, you will turn it into a metaphor for only something that you can accept. And thus the Faithless have made God himself merely symbolic, because they do not truly believe in God. So many of them think that they are scholars and heroes, but they are unsaved, and they will burn in hell.

FAITH CONFESSION

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalms 23:6)

This is a faith confession. It is a form of prayer. Specifically, it is affirming prayer. It is a form of prayer that affirms our faith, that affirms what we believe. It is a form of prayer that affirms the things we know about God, the things we know that God has done, and the things we know that God has said. And it affirms the things that we know about ourselves because of God or in relation to God.

This form of prayer does not wish and wonder, but it affirms its content as true and sure. It does not say, "Perhaps goodness and mercy shall follow me, if it is God's will." It does not say, "Lord, I beg you to allow goodness and mercy to follow me, if it is your will." Rather, it declares, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me. There is no doubt about this. I am not asking, and I am not wishing. Of course goodness and mercy will follow me. And goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, not only some days, but all my days."

This form of prayer is used in hundreds of verses in the Bible. It is common for prayer to take the form of definite and affirmative statements of what God has done or what God will do. The person affirms what God will do for him. He affirms what he possesses or what he will receive. He affirms what will happen for him. He affirms what will happen with his circumstances.

Christians continue to pray this way as they affirm forgiveness and salvation, healing and prosperity, favor and protection, signs and wonders, and all the things that belong to us because we have faith in God and because we follow Jesus Christ.

The Faithless do not pray this way. They affirm sin, sickness, poverty, suffering, and defeat. They do not affirm blessing and victory because they have no confidence in God. They have no knowledge or confidence in the contract that believers have with God through Jesus Christ. Although they present themselves as the guardians of Scripture, they are the enemies of Scripture, because they do not believe the Scripture. When they pray, they speak against God's revealed will. They speak against the work of Christ. They speak against the Holy Spirit. They are not truly praying, but they are wishing and complaining and blaspheming.

Instead of affirming the word of God, and instead of affirming blessings and miracles, they affirm the circumstances around them and submit to them as if these circumstances are the will of God. In other words, they affirm that their environment is God, and their circumstances are the revelations of God's will.

The Faithless often pray, but their prayer is not believing, but begging and wishing. They do not express confidence in the outcome, but they exhibit counterfeit piety by submitting to any outcome. They would submit to the outcome as if it is the will of God even when this outcome

is against what the God of the Christians has said. This exposes the fact that they do not worship the God of the Christians, but they worship their environment and their circumstances.

They worship sickness as the will of God, and not the God of the Bible who heals the sick and casts out demons. They worship poverty as the will of God, and not the God of the Bible who prospers and makes rich. They worship the God who has ceased, and not the God of the Bible whose nature is in performing signs and wonders, and who grants various miracles and spiritual experiences.

Christians, on the other hand, affirm that the words of God are the revelations of God's will, and they will affirm the promises and abilities of God even in the face of contrary circumstances. They will reject circumstances, they will defy sickness and poverty, and they will overcome suffering and defeat as they affirm God's goodness and protection.

Pray with faith. Speak with confidence. It is not that we think our words themselves carry the power to do what we say, but the reality is that God will honor our faith and perform the work. Faith is certain. Faith does not surrender to circumstances. Faith insists on the desired outcome. Speak according to the word of God, not against the word of God. Speak according to what God can do, not what you can do. Speak according to what you know from Scripture, not what you see, hear, and feel around you.

FAITH IN THE REWARDER

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Faith is necessary. It is impossible to please God without faith. And faith is not what we say it is, but it is what God says it is. When we have faith, we believe certain things about God.

First, we believe that God exists. This refers to something specific. It does not mean that we can choose whatever we want to call God, and then claim that we believe God exists. When our text from Scripture refers to God, it has in mind only the God of Scripture. So when it says we must believe that God exists, it means we must believe the God that the Bible describes is the one that exists. To say it another way, we believe what God says about himself in the Bible.

If someone worships a rock or a bird and calls that God, he does not really believe in God, because to him God means something different and contrary to what God says about himself. This person is merely using the same word, but a word is only a symbol that represents a meaning that we wish to communicate. If someone uses the same word to refer to something different, then we are not talking about the same thing. When we say that we believe in God, we refer to the being and the reality, and not the word itself. This being and this reality that we call God must be the same as what Scripture calls God, or what God says about himself.

So if someone claims that he believes in God, but this so-called God is not all-knowing and not all-powerful, this is not the being that we mean when we refer to God, because there is only one God, and only one true idea of God, and this God is all-knowing and all-powerful. If someone claims to believe in God, but this so-called God does not forgive all our sins and heals all our diseases, this is not God, because God's inspired word states that he forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases. Thus when we say we believe in God, or that God exists, this is what we mean. We believe in this being, this person, this God, as he describes himself in Scripture.

Second, we believe that God is a rewarder. You might ask, if God is a rewarder, then shouldn't we say that this is part of what it means to believe in God, or that God exists? Indeed, it makes sense to say this. Apparently, in the context of the verse we are using, it is important to the writer to emphasize this about God. In another context, we might say that we must believe that God exists, and that God is all-powerful, or that God has sent his Son to save us, and so on. Here it is important to insist that we must believe that God is a rewarder. If a person does not believe that God is a rewarder, or if he teaches against the idea that God is a rewarder, or if he teaches that God does not reward us with the things that Scripture says that God offers as rewards, then this person does not believe in God and he has no faith.

For example, the Bible teaches that God rewards faith with healing for the body. If a person does not believe this or if he teaches against it, then his idea of God is contrary to the God that is described in Scripture, and so he does not believe in God. He does not have faith. You say, perhaps he has faith, but he has been deceived. However, if someone has been deceived into

calling Satan his God, it surely cannot mean that he has true faith. Why should we make farfetched excuses for people? In any case, we can test this by teaching him the truth. If he rejects it, then we have no right to say that he believes in God or that he has faith.

A religion that does not see God as rewarder becomes a form of self-worship, because a person would have to reward himself, so to speak. If you think that you should not receive certain things from God, or that having faith in God does not mean you can expect certain things from him, you would still pursue those things, but now you will strive for them by your own effort. In other words, you will reach for them by having faith in yourself.

The Faithless castigates the word of God on healing, prosperity, and various blessings. They claim that such a message is man-centered and unspiritual. However, they still strive after health, money, and other things that they claim we do not receive from God by faith or by virtue of our relationship with him. Therefore, their true worldview is a form of practical atheism, or to say it another way, they have made themselves their own gods.

They are not too different from those who explicitly affirm a worldview of atheism. Both of them have no God in their lives. Atheists, however, are more honest, since they admit that they have no God. The Faithless, on the other hand, has God in their worldview, but only as a symbol, and not in reality. This is what we witness in the theology of cessationism and other false doctrines and religions. God is only good for what they call spiritual things. In other areas of life, he is at the most a philosophical principle to guide their opinions and efforts. God himself does not do anything for them or work miracles for them in an active, constant, and obvious manner in healing, prosperity, supernatural protection, and in other areas of life. The Faithless refuse blessings from God, but they use their own effort to reach for the same results. There is no religion or theology more self-centered or man-centered than this. They are high-minded and self-righteous. Their allegiance to Christ is false.

The ones who brag about how they exalt God as ruler over all of life, are often the ones who compartmentalize their lives more than everybody else. They are unaware of this because they are too impressed with how God-centered they are. They pretend to apply God's word to politics without asking him to perform signs and wonders, when that was how the early disciples handled political opposition. They pretend to apply God's word to economics without having faith in him for prosperity. They pretend to apply God's word to healthcare without having faith in him for miracles of healing. You see, they do not think of him as God at all. The God in their "God-centered" religion is really themselves. They have made themselves God, and they decide what it means to be God-centered regardless of what God has said and what God has promised and commanded.

The Faithless think it is a deception to believe that the more spiritual you are the more you will receive from God, although the Bible teaches exactly this. The true deception comes from the Faithless, who teach that the more spiritual you are the less you will want from God. According to the Faithless, if you are spiritual, if you are mature, you will only want to grow in holiness and character, and you will not want healing and prosperity, success and protection, and signs

and wonders and various supernatural experiences. This is the true deception, because by this lie Satan has been able to keep Christians weak and unhappy. It follows that the gospel makes less progress and sinners burn in hell.

It is God's glory to bless his people. God glorifies himself by showing his power and grace, and by making a distinction between Christians and sinners. It is his glory to show the world that he is a father, a provider, a healer. It is his glory to show the world that he is a teacher, a warrior, a defender. If we are God-centered, we would listen to his teachings on how to think about the things we want for our lives. If we are God-centered, we would listen to him when he says that anyone who approaches him must believe that he is a rewarder. He is not a taker. He is a giver. And he wants us to be the takers, to take from him when we seek him. This is what glorifies him, because this acknowledges him as God.

God is not only the God of the hills or the God of the valleys. He is the only God, and he is the God of everything. Since the Faithless behave as if he is God of the spirit and not God of the body, they make him into a pagan deity, in a similar way that Israel represented him by a golden calf. And we know that pagan deities are either demons or myths. If we were living under the Old Testament, true believers would have had to slaughter the Faithless to appease the wrath of God, lest the rest of the community become implicated. Today we ought to excommunicate the Faithless, but Christians are unfaithful and disobedient, so that those who teach faithless religion are not expelled, but rather tolerated and even admired as leaders and scholars, and as defenders of orthodoxy. God does not want you to have faith so that you can help him, but so that he can help you! God does not want you to have faith so that you can give him a good life, but so that he can give you a good life. The Faithless reverse all of this, as if they also wish God would fall down and worship them!

The Faithless insist that faith should lead to suffering, when they are the ones causing suffering to those who have faith. Most of the persecution suffered by Jesus and the early disciples came from religious zealots, leaders, and scholars that claimed to worship God. The Jews handed over Jesus to Pilate. They insisted that Jesus be crucified even as this heathen official tried to set him free. The Jews betrayed and murdered the apostles. And then the Jews followed Paul around and caused arguments and violence in order to oppose the gospel. They were also the ones who tried to introduce legalism and heresy into the church.

Christians teach that God is a good God, and that he has made promises of salvation, healing, prosperity, favor, protection, signs and wonders, and all kinds of miracles and spiritual experiences. The Faithless are indignant and claim that there is not enough suffering in this gospel, and they follow Christians around to persecute them and criticize them in the name of their faithless orthodoxy. Christians who teach the message of faith indeed experience suffering, and this suffering comes from the Faithless who complain that the true gospel has too little suffering in it! The Faithless complain that the gospel of faith has no enemies, but the Faithless are themselves the enemies of the gospel.

Most non-Christians do not care enough about the gospel to persecute the Christians. Most of them either believe and convert, or they mind their own business. Those who persecute Christians are few in comparison to the Faithless who persecute Christians. The Faithless -- those who are religious but unbelieving -- are those who persecute Christians and cause most of their suffering. This is identical to the situation we see in Scripture, but the Faithless are so self-righteous that they remain unaware that they are now in the same position as those who murdered the prophets and persecuted Jesus Christ and his disciples.

The ones who have faith face opposition from those who are without faith. Some persecution comes from those who deny that God exists, but much more persecution comes from those who deny that God is a rewarder. It is impossible for either group to please God. Of course, those who refuse to believe that God is a rewarder in fact refuse to believe God as he is or as he has revealed himself. Therefore, when they claim to believe that God exists, this belief is a sham, because they believe in something contrary to what should be called God.

Anyone who comes to God must believe that God exists, or that God is as he is, or that God is what he says about himself, and he must believe that God is a rewarder to those who seek him. His rewards are the things described in Scripture, and they include all kinds of blessings and benefits that apply to all areas of life. Christians might be criticized and persecuted, mostly by faithless religionists, but even then we will overcome and live a good life. We will leave the Faithless behind to be captured and abused by Satan, and afterward they will burn in hell.

The most faithless and hypocritical religionists are those people who brag about their "God-centered" theology but at the same time bulldoze over everything in the Bible that is contrary to their idea of being "God-centered." In reality, they are centered on the religion that they have invented, and they are determined to force everyone else to conform, including God himself. If God says it is his nature and pleasure to heal the body by miracles, they throw that out because it is too centered on man. If God says that his followers have no need to worry about money, food, and clothing because he will provide these things in abundance so that even Solomon cannot compare, they denounce that as a gospel of greed.

These same people claim that God is not only "spiritual" but that he is for all of life, but they are the ones who refuse to allow God into most areas of their lives. They put themselves into all areas of their lives, and also into God's life. They think that a message teaching that God will solve all our problems is man-centered and unspiritual, as if we are the ones who would solve our own problems and also God's problems. This is supposed to be God-centered and spiritual, but the fact is that they have made God into a symbol only, and they have made themselves God instead.

This kind of religion cannot lead to heaven, because it does not really believe in God. There is only man in this theology, and no God at all. God-centered theology should not mean that we do not care about healing and prosperity, success and miracles, but it should mean that we care about what God thinks first of all. If God says he gives us these things, then God-centered

theology will scream that we shall have these things. A theology is not God-centered if it demeans what God promises us and if it refuses to care about what God cares about.

FAITH IS GOD'S "YES"

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith knows. Faith is confident. Faith is full of peace and power. Faith does not beg and whine. Faith is happy. Faith is not depressed. Faith is triumphant. Faith is not defeated. Faith is persistent. Faith does not give up. Faith does not make excuses. Faith does not think that tragedy is heroic or romantic, because faith is not deceived. Faith is not stupid. Faith does not pretend that weakness is piety. Faith knows that victory is piety.

The Bible says that faith is assurance and faith is conviction. Another translation says, "Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen." You want something, and by faith you have the reality of it. Even before you see it and feel it, you have the proof that it is true. You have more than a promise, because by faith you have grasped the reality of the promise. By faith, what you want is no longer a fantasy, but a reality. By faith, it is no longer undecided, but your faith has decided and made it a sure thing.

The Faithless think that when we want something, God might reply with a "Yes" or a "No," and we never know what he decides until we see success or failure. On the contrary, Scripture shows that, by faith, even what seems to be a "No" from God is turned to a "Yes" from God, because God always says "Yes" to faith. In fact, our faith is God saying "Yes" to us in our hearts. If you have faith for something, God has already said "Yes" to you. By faith, we know for certain what God will do. We never need to wait or to wonder.

The Faithless can also see that God says "Yes" in the Bible, but in their experience it is always a "No." The reason is their lack of faith, and the fact that they have never believed in God. But they wish to appear strong in faith, and become the leaders and examples of those who follow Jesus, and so they blame their failures on "the will of God," as if God would decide to contradict his own promises and commands. As they do this, they multiply their sin.

The Faithless double damn themselves. First, they damn themselves because they have no faith. Second, they damn themselves again because they make excuses for their lack of faith, and in the process they invent false doctrines, mislead other people, blaspheme against God, and persecute those who believe. Their faithless doctrines will fulfill themselves in their bodies and spirits, destroying them and damning them.

Most of the problems in humanity exist or continue to exist because of the Faithless -- religious people who are faithless and perpetuate faithless doctrines. They claim to be followers of Christ, and many have made themselves leaders and teachers. Yet they are the greatest enemies of the gospel, even more so than those who admit that they are unbelievers. Faithless religious people are the most wicked and destructive individuals.

A crude "Give me!" faith is far better than a false reverence that makes the sovereignty of God into an excuse for failure and unbelief. God sovereignly sent Jesus to suffer in our place and to grant us his power. Why won't you receive his salvation and his miracles?

Samson said to God, "What, after giving me such a great victory, should I now die of thirst?" According to Scripture's own commentary, he was an example of faith. Samson took it for granted that God should always give him victory and always care for him. Samson knew that he mattered to God, and he knew God would supply whatever Samson wanted in any situation. That was faith. And God caused water to gush out from a hollow in the ground.

The Faithless, with all their outward display of scholarship and reverence, cannot be counted as those who have faith. They have replaced God's gospel of healing and miracles with their message of suffering and defeat. The Faithless love to talk about suffering, because the one they worship is not God the Father of Jesus Christ, but the idol that is called Suffering.

And they cannot be honored among those who suffer persecution because of faith. This is because they are the ones who persecute those who have faith. They are the ones who cause suffering in those who follow Jesus Christ and preach his message of healing and miracles, prosperity and protection, favor and success, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

FAITH IS INSISTENCE, NOT ACCEPTANCE

Faith is not accepting circumstances, because our God is not circumstances. Our God is the one who commands and overcomes circumstances. And he is the one who empowers us to command and overcome circumstances by our faith. Faith is accepting the word of God. Faith is in accepting God's promise to answer our prayers. Faith is in accepting God's guarantee to give us what we ask.

The word of God tells you what ought to happen. The word of God declares that you have the right to expect certain things. So faith insists on possessing what the word of God describes. Faith insists on living the kind of life that the word of God guarantees to us.

Faithless religious teachers portray faith as acceptance. They think that because God rules the circumstances, it means that whatever happens is a revelation of the will of God and you must accept it. This is deception. It implies that they worship their circumstances, and they do not in fact believe in the God of Scripture. The Faithless claim that they believe the Scripture, but they are liars. They believe that the will of God is revealed in the circumstances of man, but Christians believe that the will of God is revealed in the statements of Scripture.

God indeed rules the circumstances, and this means that we must insist on whatever he says about our relationship with the circumstances. If God says that we ought to be healed, then when there is sickness in our circumstances, we should know that God wants us to change the circumstances by faith and annihilate the sickness by his power. If God says that I should have an abundant life, then I insist on having an abundant life. If God says that Jesus carried my sicknesses, then I refuse to carry any sickness and insist on receiving healing. If anything happens in my circumstances that threatens this life of abundance, healing, and victory, I will refuse to accept it as the will of God, because God has said something different to me.

This is faith. I refuse to welcome every circumstance as the will of God. I will welcome only what is consistent with what God has said to me. By faith, you insist on getting what God promised. By faith, you insist on getting what you ask from God. By faith, you insist on asking and receiving, seeking and finding. By faith, you insist on knocking on the door and making it open for you. Even when a situation turned for the worse, Jesus did not say that they would accept that as the will of God, because God ruled over all circumstances. Rather, he defied the circumstances and said, "Fear not, only believe."

A suffering faith reveals our goodness toward God, but a prospering faith reveals God's goodness toward us. God is not glorified by a suffering religion, but by a prospering religion. Man is glorified by a suffering religion. Man is not glorified by a healing, prospering, and a miraculous and victorious religion that credits all things to the grace and power of God.

But doesn't the Bible teach a suffering faith? It does not. It really does not. It teaches that those who walk in faith will suffer only in a very narrow sense. Specifically, it teaches that those who follow God's religion will be persecuted by those who teach man's religion.

Man's religion is the religion that endorses the kind of suffering that results from unbelief and weakness. The Faithless praise the kind of suffering that people experience when they are without God, without faith, and without miracles. They think that those who suffer sickness, poverty, and depression are heroes, but the gospel tells us to overcome these things by faith. And when we have faith, we might suffer religious persecution, and this kind of persecution will come from those who teach the religion of man.

The Faithless teach a religion of suffering, and they are the ones who cause the suffering in other people. They are the ones who persecute those who have faith. But the kind of suffering that the Faithless encourage -- sickness, poverty, defeat and depression -- is the kind of suffering that the Bible rejects, the kind of suffering that Jesus has saved us from.

The kind of suffering that the Bible teaches is the kind that happens when we stand for the grace and power of God. He saves us, and he heals and prospers us. He favors us and protects us. He fills us with wisdom and courage. He enables us to heal the sick and cast out demons. He inspires us to prophesy, and to pray and sing in tongues. This blessed life incites jealousy and indignation in those who follow the religion of man. And so they attack those who have faith in God's grace. This is where suffering comes from. But even then, we can overcome them, because greater is he who is in us, than he who is in the world. We always triumph in Jesus Christ.

Today, we see that those who preach the gospel of prosperity suffer from those who claim to be Christians, but who reject the prosperity that God teaches. They refuse to receive prosperity from God, but they seek prosperity by their own human effort and wisdom. They declare that this is a religion of humility, but it is a religion of humanism. These people acknowledge God with their lips, but they reject God's grace, and instead they worship man's ability and resolve. They worship themselves and their circumstances.

Christians who preach the gospel of healing are persecuted not mainly by the non-Christians, since most non-Christians do not know about it or care about it. Most of the persecution comes from those who claim to follow Jesus, who claim to be defenders and guardians of the faith, who claim to be historic and orthodox in their doctrines, but at the same time reject the direct and explicit words of Scripture about God's healing power. They refuse to continue the healing ministry of Jesus. They are the ones who attack the faithful disciples who continue the ministry of Jesus and those who have faith to receive from him. When the Bible talks about suffering, it is talking about the suffering that comes from these wicked people who preach the gospel of suffering.

The Bible does not teach a suffering gospel, but a prospering gospel, not a losing message, but a winning message. It teaches a gospel of healing and prosperity. God has been a God of healing and prosperity since the beginning of Scripture to the end of Scripture. Healing has always been portrayed as a blessing, and sickness has been portrayed as a curse. And prosperity has always been portrayed as a reward to faith and holiness. The Bible says, "Humility and the fear of the

LORD results in wealth, honor, and life." Thus following God brings healing and prosperity, honor and other blessings. It has always been this way.

Pain, suffering, sickness, poverty, and defeat are never signs of piety. The suffering that Christians experience does not come from the gospel itself, but from enemies of the gospel who teach a religion of suffering. The suffering does not come from God, but from the Faithless, who worship Suffering as their idol, their false god.

The Bible teaches a prospering religion, but it admits that we might experience suffering in this world. This suffering will most often come from those who disagree that the Bible teaches a prospering religion. This suffering will most often come from those who, contrary to all evidence in the Bible, insist that the Bible teaches a suffering religion. The people who teach a suffering religion are the very ones who cause suffering in this world. And the people who teach a prospering religion are the ones who resist and overcome this suffering that is caused by Satan and the Faithless.

Faith is insistence, not acceptance. Faith insists on receiving God's blessings. Faith insists on possessing our desires. Faith refuses to accept circumstances as the will of God. Faith refuses to accept circumstances as unavoidable and unchangeable. Have faith. Insist on getting God's blessings. Insist on getting what you want in prayer. Refuse to accept circumstances. Renounce a faithless suffering religion. When you face a situation you do not like, never accept it. Never suffer what you do not have to suffer. Insist on healing. Insist on prosperity. Insist on blessings. Insist on miracles.

FAITH: CONFIDENCE ABOUT YOURSELF

For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. (Psalms 18:29)

Understand the difference between confidence in yourself and confidence about yourself. You can have a low confidence in yourself, but a high confidence about yourself. Christians have been deceived by faithless teaching, so that they think it is humility to have a low opinion and low confidence about yourself. But this is false humility. In fact, it is arrogance and self-centeredness, because this attitude rejects the blood of Christ and the gospel.

You can have a low confidence in yourself, but have a high confidence about yourself, if there is someone else you can trust in to believe that good things about you will happen. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, you can think good thoughts about yourself, because God says good things about you. When you have a low confidence in yourself, you open yourself up to the highest confidence about yourself, because you will turn to what God says about you and what God can do in you and through you.

Suppose a wealthy man tells you, "Choose any house you want, and I will buy it for you." Now you can say, "I can buy any house I want. Any house I choose, I will get it." Because you have the man's promise and support, now you have confidence about yourself, not confidence in yourself. Confidence in yourself has become irrelevant. You are confident about what house you can buy. You have certainty about the outcome. This is not because you can afford it, but because he can afford it. It is not because you are confident in your wealth, but because you are confident in his wealth.

The moment you accept the rich man's offer, your own level of wealth becomes irrelevant. It would not be humility to insist, "I cannot buy any house I want. I have limitations." It would be a lie to say this. It would show that you are not living in reality. It would show a contempt for the benefactor's wealth and integrity. If you have no confidence about yourself in buying the house you want, then you have no confidence in that man's wealth or integrity. Faith is reality. When you walk by faith, you live in the reality of God.

Once you become a follower of Jesus Christ, you have confidence about yourself that God will accept you into heaven. You are certain that heaven is your home. This is not because you have confidence in yourself. You do not think that you are accepted because of your own goodness or ability or status. Rather, you have confidence about yourself -- about whether God accepts you -- because of Christ. You have confidence in Christ, so that you have confidence about yourself. Because of what Christ does for those who follow him, confidence in Christ inevitably leads to confidence about yourself. In fact, this confidence about yourself is as strong or as weak as your confidence in Christ. And if there is no confidence about yourself, it is evidence that there is no confidence in Christ.

Let us make the same point from another perspective. You can have confidence in the ministry of healing the sick. When a sick person comes to you for help, you can have confidence about

his situation. You have confidence that he will receive healing. This is not because you have confidence in yourself to heal the sick, and it is not because you have confidence in that person's ability to recover, but you have confidence about his healing because you have confidence in God to perform a miracle. You do not have confidence in yourself or in the other person. You have confidence in God, and this leads to confidence about this man who needs healing.

When you grasp the distinction between confidence in yourself and confidence about yourself, you are able to have confidence about yourself in every situation, because you now place your confidence in God alone. He is able to solve every problem, work any miracle, and answer your prayers. Faith in God, therefore, is incompatible with doubts and fears about yourself. It is incompatible with doubts and fears about your abilities, your future, your status, your righteousness, or anything about yourself. When you have faith in God, you walk in the reality of God. You judge all things by the word of God, the righteousness of God, and the ability of God.

FAITH IS GOOD ENOUGH

Satan has never been able to condemn my conscience. He cannot make me feel bad about anything. He cannot cripple my ability to fellowship with God or to receive from God due to guilty and unworthy feelings. It is easy to overcome the accusations of Satan when we see the truth.

The first key to the whole thing is to admit your sins. Why is that so difficult, unless you have a stubborn pride in your heart so that you wish to think of yourself as perfect? Oh, that possibility was long gone. You are not perfect. You have committed many sins. Just admit everything. Admit your sins before Satan has the chance to say anything. He does not even talk to me about my sins, because he cannot tell me anything that I do not know about them, and he cannot point out anything that I have not already admitted before God.

Many people appear to grasp this first thing, but then they stumble over the second thing. This second key is just as important as the first, and if you stumble over this second one, it is doubtful that you truly understand the first one. This second thing is to affirm that God has made you righteous in Christ Jesus. There are those who claim to affirm this point, but they keep holding on to their own sins, as if they have not confessed them and abandoned them.

They insist that they are still sinners more than they affirm that they are righteous in Christ. They think that they are being humble and honest when they do this, but the truth is that they have never given up on being righteous in themselves, and they do not have their trust in the righteousness of Christ. If you depend on the righteousness of Christ that has been applied to your account, then when it comes to your standing before God and your boldness before Satan, your own righteousness is irrelevant.

To illustrate, once I trust in the name of Jesus to cast out demons, the merit in my own name has become irrelevant. When you wield the authority of Christ to cast out demons, it would be absurd, and totally stupid and laughable, to speak both the name of Jesus and your own name when you confront the evil spirits. What would we say about someone who does this? Imagine if you see Tommy Jones declare before a demon, "I command you to come out in the name of Tommy Jones and in the name of Jesus Christ." You would think that he is so full of religious pride that he has become delusional.

And this is what we should think about someone who keeps calling himself a sinner, while claiming to trust in the righteousness of Christ. He is self-centered and arrogant to the point of becoming delusional. This person makes himself vulnerable to Satan, because he still thinks that his own righteousness is relevant. Of course, we continue to pursue holiness in obedience to the teachings and examples of Christ, but that has nothing to do with my status before God, before the world, or before Satan.

As much as I am confident that Jesus Christ is accepted before God, I am to the same degree confident that I am accepted before God, because I am accepted in Christ. It would be absurd

to think that God accepts Christ, but rejects his lungs or his legs, or that his fingers must earn their own acceptance. Christ is one, and I am one with Christ by faith. If God accepts Christ, then God accepts me, because there is no difference.

Satan cannot touch my conscience, because my conscience is pegged to the righteousness of Christ and not my own righteousness, and Satan cannot accuse Christ of sin or failure. For the same reason, I have no unruly thoughts that can disturb my conscience, because there is no fault in Christ. You say, "But haven't you sinned? And haven't you failed?" I admit everything, and I feel no difference. If you wish, I can even admit things that I have not done, and it still makes no difference. My conscience is not moved by any accusation, whether true or false, whether sincere or manipulative, because my conscience is not pegged to my performance. I have an invincible peace, because no one can destroy the righteousness of Christ.

Think on these things. Put down your pride and admit your sins. Give up on attaining perfection by your own power. Don't pretend to give up but harbor some lingering hope about it. Throw out your own righteousness, and along with that, your pride, and you will no longer be vulnerable to the attacks of Satan, or to the religious traditions of men, which come from Satan. Put on the righteousness of Christ. Wear it like clothing. Trust in it like armor. By grace and through faith, God has applied this perfect righteousness to your account.

The righteousness of Christ will change your feelings. It will upgrade your speech. It will move you to action. Suppose a multibillionaire decides to share his wealth with you and promises to never take it away. It will change your feelings. You will feel rich just as if you have billions of dollars. Although the money does not originate with you or directly belong to you, in effect you indeed have billions of dollars. It will upgrade your speech. Before this, you might say, "I cannot afford this." Now you say, "This is nothing. I can easily afford this." It will upgrade your perspective. Before this, you might exclaim, "I cannot pay for this with five years of my wages." Now you say, "This is so cheap that it is as good as free." It will move you to action. You will make plans. You will buy things. You will help people.

In fact, once this multibillionaire shares his wealth with you, it would be unnatural for you to feel, to talk, and to behave like before. If you remain unchanged, and if you still feel poor, talk poor, and act poor, it would mean that you have no faith in the billionaire or that you have lost all sense of reality, so that you would remain like a poor person when you have access to billions of dollars. When your sense of wealth is pegged to someone else's billions of dollars, you will feel rich, talk rich, and act rich. Your feelings correspond to the other person's wealth, not your own. Likewise, when you abandon your own righteousness and walk in the righteousness of Christ, you will feel perfect, talk big, and act bold. If you do not, then you are still walking in your own righteousness. This is not humility. It is a sure sign of religious pride and unbelief.

Once you have admitted your sins, and once you have acknowledged the righteousness of Christ, move on to the third phase, and that is to get on the offensive. Establish yourself in the

righteousness of Christ, and then go on to attack Satan and religious traditions, the doctrines of men and demons.

Satan might whisper to your mind, "You are not good enough to receive healing from God." Laugh in his face and say, "Hey, when did you find that out? Of course I am not good enough in myself, and I have never been good enough to get anything from God. But I have not thought about that for years! I have admitted this a long time ago and gave up on myself. I have put off the righteousness of man, and I have put on the righteousness of Christ. And he is good enough to get anything he asks from God. I stand on a righteousness that is good enough to get anything I ask."

As Satan turns to leave, arrest him for a moment and say, "Wait a minute, though. What about you? You are literally the devil, and you are telling me I am not good enough? Look at yourself! You are much worse! Good enough, you say? You are the worst of the worst. You are not good enough to talk to me even before I was saved by Christ. Now that I walk in the righteousness of Christ, you are as far below me as you are below the Son of God. I cast you out in the name of Jesus. Don't even dare to look in my direction." Have you considered this? Satan accuses people to God and to themselves, but he is worse than all of them.

Say to Satan, "You are stupid, aren't you? If I am not good enough to receive healing, you are not good enough to tell me this either. If I am not good enough to expect God to answer my prayer, you are not good enough to accuse me of anything, because you are much worse. Satan, you who accuse the people of God, I will accuse you! I have Jesus Christ the Son of God as my champion and my righteousness. What do you have? You have nothing. You are nothing. You are not good enough to stand in my presence." If you have faith in Jesus, then you are good enough, because Jesus is good enough. He is good enough for anything. Faith is worthy, because faith is not a product of man, but a gift from God.

What if a man says that he is unworthy, and therefore he never prays and he never reads the Scripture? Even when an opportunity presents itself to explain the gospel, he refuses because he claims he is unworthy. We would not praise him or think that he is humble. We would call him wicked and rebellious. He uses self-deprecation as a tactic to persist in his carnality and disobedience.

The same applies to healing the sick and performing miracles. The faithless theology of historic tradition whines, "We are not apostles. We are not special." They say this to excuse their unbelief and rebellion. The Faithless trust in themselves, and since they are the trash of humanity, no wonder they cannot heal the sick and speak in tongues. They try to spin this as orthodoxy and humility, but we are not deceived.

The faithless theology of counterfeit orthodoxy and cessationism produces a false sense of guilt that is based on religious pride and self-centeredness. It is Satan's weapon to dull your effectiveness and to destroy your courage for life and ministry. The Bible says that the blood of Jesus removes the consciousness of sin, but faithless theology preserves the consciousness of

sin on purpose as a function of humility and holiness. Wake up. Stay alert. Faithless religion is a trap and a scam. The orthodoxy of tradition and history routinely contradicts the orthodoxy of God and revelation.

The Faithless preach a message that echoes the accusations of Satan. They are the voice of the devil. Their zealots and scholars are his servants. Their sermons and creeds are his propaganda. Their churches and seminaries are his strongholds. They think that they are pious for insisting that they are forever sinners. But if they are, then they have never been saved. They do not believe in Jesus Christ, and they will burn in hell. And since they do not stand with Christ, then they are not good enough to stand with us. Because they are in the same position as Satan, they are not good enough to stand before the righteousness of God. We are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. We will cast out the Faithless just like we cast out Satan and the demons of hell.

The righteousness of Christ has the authority to heal the sick and cast out demons, and to work miracles. Christ is greater than all the apostles combined, and they had to depend on him to work miracles. But the righteousness of Christ has been applied to our account. Every step we take, we depend on the righteousness of Christ. If he can do miracles, then I can do miracles.

Healing is not earned, and it cannot be earned. The law was given to show that men cannot earn their position with God, and cannot earn the blessing of God. Even in attempting it, they earned themselves the curse instead. But Jesus suffered in our place, and he carried all of the curse. By faith we are free, we are healed, and we are perfected in him. There is no curse for us. We rest in the work of Christ, by faith.

Do not let Satan suggest that you cannot receive healing because you are not good enough. Do not let him suggest that you cannot minister healing to others because you are not good enough, or not holy enough, or that you have not been called into a special ministry. No one is good enough, and no one is special in himself, but there is forgiveness and the gift of righteousness for anyone who looks to Jesus Christ. There is a high calling for every one of us in him.

MIRACLES: THE ERA OF GOD

There has never been an era of miracles, because there has always been a God of miracles, and he has worked miracles among men since the beginning. Since there has never been an era of miracles, there could never be an end to an era of miracles. Miracles happen because there is a God of miracles, and the life of God is everlasting. He will never cease. All of history is the era of God, and he is a God of miracles. This is God's world. This is God's time. This is the time for miracles. Every day is a day for miracles.

From the beginning of human history, men and women had walked in the supernatural. They would communicate with God in visions and dreams, and when they prayed, God would heal their sick, prosper their work, and perform signs and wonders for them. Even before the coming of Jesus, God would choose individuals among his people as judges and prophets, and he would anoint them with his Spirit to perform feats of strength and power, to receive visions and supernatural knowledge, and to prophesy about things to come.

Then Jesus came to the world. He was not the first one to perform miracles, but he did thousands upon thousands of miracles. He performed powerful miracles like opening blind eyes, walking on water, and feeding thousands of people. He even made dead people return to life. He possessed a freakish level of supernatural power, but he directed it in an intelligent and consistent manner. And he revealed that faith was the key that would enable anyone to wield the same kind of supernatural power. Thus he elevated the ministry of miracles to something that could be explained. We can discuss it. We can teach it. He made the supernatural life something that can be pursued and attained on purpose.

Jesus came to initiate a breakthrough for God's people, so that all of them could work miracles the same way he did. Soon after he came on the scene as a miracle-worker, he sent out the apostles to also work miracles in his name. But the apostles were never unique even during the ministry of Christ. He sent out at least another seventy disciples with the same power to work miracles.

He sent them out himself. These additional disciples did not receive their power from the apostles, and they did not need permission from the apostles to perform miracles. They could heal the sick and cast out demons because of their association with Jesus, not because of their association with the apostles.

Therefore, even before the resurrection of Christ, most of the people who could work miracles were not apostles. And the apostles had nothing to do with how these disciples gained their power. The apostles had always been a small minority of those who could work miracles. Supernatural power was never an exclusive right or power associated with the apostles.

In fact, there was a man who cast out demons by sheer faith in the name of Jesus. He had no direct association with Jesus. He had no commission from him. He had no permission from the apostles, and the apostles even tried to stop him. When the apostles told Jesus about this,

Jesus sided with the man against the apostles, and told them not to stop him. So any person who had faith to work miracles not only had no need to consult the apostles, but he could defy the apostles to their face even if they had tried to stop him. We see from this incident that there was no need to even consult Jesus himself, but when Jesus found out about it, he agreed with the man. Faith in Jesus is the only authorization needed to heal the sick, cast out demons, and walk in the supernatural.

Since the ascension of Christ and the ministry of the apostles, the potential for Christians to perform miracles has drastically increased. Our ability to perform signs and wonders continues to expand in every way and in every direction. Our faith grows broader and deeper. The Spirit's empowering presence becomes more diverse, penetrating each gender and class, and extending to every location.

Miracles did not cease with Jesus Christ. He was preparing all things for us. He fulfilled the predictions of the prophets. He handed down divine teachings about faith, faith that can heal the sick, move mountains, and work miracles. He said that it is a faith that can ask and receive whatever we will or decide. He trained his followers to heal the sick and cast out demons, and he sent out more and more of them to perform various miracles in his name.

He fulfilled his role as the Messiah and achieved ultimate greatness, and he obtained the Holy Spirit from the Father, so that he may pour out this God-power upon all his followers, with the intention that all of them would work miracles. They are to be his witnesses and shake the world in his name. Miracles did not end with Jesus, but he was the beginning of an extreme and global explosion of miracles. He said that anyone who has faith in him could do even greater miracles that he did.

This doctrine is the voice of the shepherd. Anyone who rejects this doctrine, therefore, exposes himself as a wolf, as a false teacher, a false follower, an imposter, and not one of his sheep. This doctrine came straight from the Son of God, the true shepherd, and it applies to every believer. This makes it a test of orthodoxy and of true discipleship.

If anyone doubts the idea that every follower of Christ can work miracles in any era in history and at any location in the world, and with no credential other than faith in God, then this person cannot be orthodox or faithful in his theology, and he must be a false teacher. He must be publicly mocked and opposed, and if he refuses to repent, he ought to be excommunicated.

Jesus was preparing the ministry of miracles for his followers. He was teaching faith and pouring out his Spirit. Then he ascended to heaven and his apostles took over the work. They took over the leadership of the work, but they were a tiny minority among the disciples who performed miracles. And miracles did not cease with the apostles. The apostles were not rebels or demons. They did not shut down the project that Jesus started. Their doctrine and conduct were contrary to the trinity of evil -- atheism, satanism, and cessationism. We see atheists, satanists, and cessationists all strive to terminate the work of Jesus. He labored. He taught. He

suffered. He died. He rose from the dead and poured out his Spirit. But these people wish to throw everything that he did to the trash.

The apostles were not like these demons in human flesh. They were obedient to God's program. They continued to prepare the groundwork for the expansion of the ministry of miracles to each gender, class, and location. For the ministry of miracles, it was still the beginning. Miracles would continue for thousands of years. And if Christians would walk in faith, miracles would become stronger and stronger, and more and more widespread. Jesus was called the cornerstone. Beginning with him, the apostles continued the groundwork. And so the apostles were called the foundation -- the mere beginning of miracles. They were never called the termination of miracles.

Jesus did not entrust the ministry of miracles only to the apostles. The apostles themselves were the minority among miracle-workers even before the death and resurrection of Christ. And then they became the super tiny minority of miracle-workers from the first hour that the Holy Spirit was poured out. Over ninety percent of those who received the Holy Spirit to work miracles were not apostles, but they were ordinary believers that consisted of men and women from various backgrounds. Several hours later, thousands more were added and received the Holy Spirit, so that almost a hundred percent of those who had the power to work miracles were not apostles, but ordinary believers and new converts.

Make miracles a priority in your ministry. In your studies and sermons, devote yourself to miracles, to healing, to prophecy, and other related topics. Assert aggressively the God of miracles and the doctrine of miracles. Preach about it over and over again. To those who agree with the doctrine of faith and the life of the Spirit, make it your priority to provide guidance and refinement. Many of them are teachable, but meanwhile only make a lot of noise and offer very little in experience. They need to become deliberate in their faith and learn to produce consistent and powerful results. Then the life of miracles will become what it is intended to be -- a spiritual and practical blessing to humanity, and an intelligent testimony to the reality of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

FAITH, NOT SACRIFICE

God delights in faith and mercy, not suffering and sacrifice. He does not need your pain to make him feel good. He does not need your sacrifice to enrich himself. He is glorified when he shows off his generosity, not when you show off your piety. The Faithless reverse this, as if we would bring shame to God's name by receiving good things from him, and as if we could glorify him only when we suffer. They worship the false god of Suffering, rather than the true God of salvation and blessing, of love and peace, of healing and prosperity, and of signs and wonders.

By faith, Abraham received Isaac, and by faith, he figuratively received him back from the dead. When God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham was willing to do it, but at the end he did not have to sacrifice him. God was satisfied that Abraham was willing to make the sacrifice. Instead, God stopped Abraham from making the sacrifice, and from Abraham's mouth came the revelation, "the Lord will provide." God then provided the thing that Abraham sacrificed to God. God paid his own way. This foreshadowed the coming and the death of Christ. God made the sacrifice that he demanded. By Jesus Christ, God paid the price that he demanded from sinners in order to secure their salvation.

Follow the faith of Abraham. We should be willing to sacrifice for God, but we ought to receive his promises by faith, so that whatever we sacrifice we can get it back by faith. Abraham even received his son back from the dead. He received Isaac back from the dead in a figurative sense, because God stopped him from making the sacrifice. But if God had not stopped him, Abraham would have received Isaac back from the dead in a physical and literal sense, because God promised to make Abraham a father of nations through Isaac. The gospel is the good news that God sacrificed for us. Whatever payment God demanded for our salvation and prosperity, he made the payment himself.

A man is not doing God a favor when he dies with cancer or perishes in an accident. That is not serving God. That is not serving humanity. That is not helping family. You say, "My uncle died of cancer, and my mother was converted when she heard the beautiful funeral sermon. So cancer was the will of God, and it turned out the sickness was a blessing." We are thankful for the one convert. However, you do not know what could have happened if your uncle did not die of cancer.

Suppose a Christian had visited your uncle and prayed for him in faith, and God healed your uncle. The cancer disappeared completely, and the doctors were astounded and called it a miracle. Then both your uncle and your mother were converted. Your uncle became zealous for God and testified to his family, and preached the gospel everywhere he went. He lived for several more decades and more than a hundred people were converted because of him.

Your uncle became an example of sound doctrine and holiness to his family. His son was deeply impressed and became an international evangelist. As a result two million were converted during his lifetime. That was what could have happened, or would have happened, if your uncle had been healed as the word of God teaches. But now your uncle died with cancer and he

burns in hell. Only your mother was converted. She was converted not because of his cancer, but despite his cancer.

But the story did not stop with your mother's conversion. There is no happy ending. Your uncle's son became bitter and resentful toward God. He had to grow up without a father, and without the spiritual and financial support that he would have received. Previously he had not given much thought about God, but now he aggressively speaks against God to anyone who would listen. It would be another five generations before anyone in that branch of the family became converted to Jesus Christ.

An anecdote is not an argument. I can argue that a different scenario could offer a better outcome. You say, "Yes, but God ordained this one where the uncle died of cancer." True, but I can still reply that God could have ordained another one where the uncle did not die and more than two million people converted as a result. Perhaps God did not ordain the cancer as a blessing to your uncle's family, but as a punishment to send your uncle and at least five generations of his descendants to burn in hell, while saving only your mother as a lone remnant.

You cannot prove that the sickness was a blessing just because one person was saved. You cannot prove that the sickness was a blessing even if one million were saved, because if a healing had happened instead, perhaps one billion would have been saved. So the one million were a small remnant who escaped the curse that came from sickness, out of the one billion that would have been blessed due to a healing. You cannot assert that sickness is a blessing because you approve of the outcome. Healing could produce a much better outcome. But it is not up to us to judge the outcome in the first place. God is the one who judges whether something is a blessing or a curse, and whether one thing is better than another.

The word of God is the proper basis of judgment. God reveals himself as eager to heal, that it is his very nature and will to heal by means of miracle power. He promises to heal. More than a promise, God has made healing a fact by Jesus Christ, since the Bible says that he already took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. All the followers of Jesus are commanded to heal the sick and cast out demons by faith in his name. The whole word of God testifies that healing is a blessing, and sickness is a curse.

God glorifies himself by healing the sick. Healing is what glorifies God. Sickness does not glorify God. Even if you think something good happened because of the sickness, if you had believed and followed the word of God, something much better could have happened. The outcome from the sickness would be a total tragedy in comparison. To say that sin is good because God can redeem the sinner and transform his life is to use God's grace against him. Likewise, to say that sickness is good because God made something good come out of sickness is to use God's goodness against him.

You can say that it was good your mother was converted, but you cannot say that it was good that your uncle died of cancer. According to the word of God, it was bad, very bad. It was a

defeat, and a curse. God made something good come out of it, because he snatched a small blessing out of a curse, but do not delude yourself into thinking that the sickness was a blessing. In fact, you cannot know how big of a curse the sickness was, because thousands of people could have been saved if there had been a healing miracle. It is always better to believe and follow the word of God. It is always better to receive from God salvation, healing, prosperity, favor, success, prophecy, signs and wonders, and all other things that belong to us by faith in Jesus Christ.

God will pay his own way. He demands faith, not sacrifice. He wants us to receive his mercy and to share his mercy with others. Your suffering does not add anything to him. Be willing to sacrifice what God demands for the sake of the gospel, but understand that God never needs your sacrifice. Refuse to sacrifice something that Jesus gave his blood to purchase for you. Refuse to suffer something that Jesus carried in your place, such as condemnation, sickness, and poverty. God made a sacrifice so that you can have a blessing. You do not have the right to forfeit. Do not blaspheme the blood of God.

If you face a difficult situation, do not accept it as good and permanent. Do not embrace it as the will of God, but know that it is the will of God for you to dominate it and overcome it. Have faith and take action to remove any unnecessary suffering. It is Satan's deception to use unnecessary suffering to make you feel like you are doing something holy and productive, when you are only being faithless and useless. Do not wallow in suffering or romanticize it. Suffering is not beautiful. It is ugly and demonic. Free yourself from any suffering that is unnecessary and pointless.

Non-Christians assign a stigma to following Jesus Christ, and because of their hostility toward God, sometimes they will attack believers. This is the only kind of suffering that honors God. Even then, much of what is perceived as suffering for God is often unnecessary. The suffering that supposedly comes due to faith in God very often comes due to people's private religious traditions and political ideologies. They are not criticized for the words of Christ, but for their own religious hang-ups and for their political opinions. They incite more persecution than necessary by their own obstinacy and foolishness.

Some persecution might come from unbelievers, or those who acknowledge that they do not worship God or follow Jesus Christ. However, it is possible that most of the persecution will come from those who claim they follow Jesus Christ, but in fact do not believe in him or obey him. Be determined to follow Jesus Christ and obey his teachings even when there is a stigma associated with it. Many people do not believe in Christ, including those in the churches and seminaries. When you obey the word of God to heal the sick and cast out demons, or to prophesy and speak in tongues, faithless religionists will oppose you.

Refuse to suffer things that have nothing to do with following Christ, things like failure and depression. Refuse to let Satan bully you and think that it honors God to be sick and poor. Tolerating hostile circumstances with a helpless smile is not what glorifies God. Overcoming hostile circumstances by faith and action in the name of Jesus is what glorifies God. Answer the

faithless preachers and theologians with a defiant shout. Suffering the works of Satan in sin and sickness, and then blaming your suffering on the will of God, is what dishonors God. This is what makes unbelievers despise Jesus Christ. Destroying the works of Satan in sin, sickness, and poverty, and then crediting your victory to faith in Christ, is what glorifies God. God delights in faith, mercy, and justice, not in stupid sacrifice. God delights in blessing, healing, and prosperity, not in foolish suffering. Refuse to be a religious chump.

There is a cross to the doctrine of faith and the ministry of miracles. There is a stigma that comes with the gospel. Sinners consider it unintelligent. The Faithless consider it unorthodox. This is the same stigma that Jesus suffered. The cross of Christ is not sickness or poverty, not tragedy or death. It is not failure and depression. The cross is opposition from those who are without faith, who are estranged from God and hostile to God, especially those who claim to be Christians, but in reality do not believe. The Faithless constantly say, "The cross we carry. The cross we carry." But they are the cross! They are the ones making people suffer! They are the ones persecuting the people of faith.

The Faithless refuse to enter into the blessings of the gospel, and they teach others not to enter this life of faith and power. Jesus was talking about people like these when he said, "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" This is an appropriate question. How will they escape? What makes them think they will enter heaven? They say, "Through Jesus Christ!" But they do not believe in Christ. They reject what he says, and they persecute those who believe. They oppose the word of God on healing and prosperity, on prophecy and tongues, on the doctrine of faith and the ministry of miracles. And they persecute those who believe any of these things.

When Jesus had a dispute with the Jews, they claimed, "We are descendants of Abraham." But Jesus answered that if they were the children of Abraham, they would do what Abraham did instead of trying to oppose Jesus and even to kill him. Abraham foresaw the coming of Christ and rejoiced. He followed the word of God, and he had faith for healing and resurrection. How could the Jews claim to be the children of Abraham, when they believed the opposite of what he believed, and did the opposite of what he did? No, Jesus said, their true father was the devil. They were the children of Satan.

In the same way, the Faithless claim that they are saved by faith in Christ, but they try to contradict and silence the ones who believe the word of God about healing and prosperity, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and the ministry of miracles. So how are they the followers of Christ? If they are the followers of Jesus, they would say what he said and do what he did. But they say the opposite of what Jesus said and do the opposite of what he did, and they attack those who say what he said and attack those who do what he did. How can we avoid the conclusion that they do not follow Jesus Christ, but that they are in fact the followers of Satan?

Shall we offer more leeway to the Faithless than Jesus offered to the Jews? Do we have the authority to do this? If Jesus said that the Jews were not the children of Abraham because of

their belief and conduct, but that they were in fact the children of Satan, where do we find the authority to say that the Faithless are the followers of Christ, when their belief and conduct contradict Christ? Are we greater than Christ himself, so that we can offer such a grand amnesty, when Christ himself did not offer it to the Jews?

If they are true followers of Jesus, they would not attack the people who believe what Jesus said about healing the sick, praying with faith, and working greater miracles. If they are true followers of Jesus, they would not oppose what the word of God teaches about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, leading to speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Spirit, and all kinds of supernatural powers and experiences. But they indeed teach against these things with what seems like a demonic hostility and determination. So who do they really follow? Who is really their master? Who do they really worship?

This faithless and anti-Christ religion has been taught by the most respected ministers and theologians throughout church history, both historic and modern. Think of a name -- someone most respected by men, someone most orthodox according to men. You can almost always assume he contradicted Jesus about these things. Just because many people have been wrong does not mean that you have to be wrong with them. As Scripture says, greater is he who is in us than he that is in the world. And if the church does not welcome the Spirit of God, then we must also say that greater is he who is in us than he that is in the church. Take up the cross. Carry the stigma associated with teaching healing and prosperity, victory and protection, praying with faith, and the ministry of miracles. Yet do not suffer passively. Fight back. The Faithless are the ones who should be ashamed. Produce a stigma for unbelief. Expose their errors and their false piety. Expose them as false teachers and false disciples.

In the days of Christ and the apostles, there was the stigma of faith and grace. The historic orthodoxy at that time favored legalism and tradition. In the days after Christ and the apostles, the stigma of faith and grace has remained, but the stigma of power and success has become even stronger. The historic orthodoxy in our time favors legalism and tradition, rituals and sacramentalism, but also unbelief and cessationism. It persecutes authentic orthodoxy with the same spirit of murder that drove the Jews to persecute Jesus and the apostles.

The Faithless teach a pagan piety that they pass off as historic orthodoxy. Jesus preached a gospel of faith, healing, and victory. He preached a gospel of miracles. But the Faithless teach a gospel of suffering. They teach a gospel of defeat and depression, a gospel of poverty and victimhood. They worship Suffering, and they are the ones who inflict most of the suffering against the people of faith. But God said he wants faith and mercy, not sacrifice. He has drawn a clear line between the true gospel and the false gospel, the followers of Christ and the followers of Satan.

OUR PROSPERITY IN GOD'S PROGRAM

In the Bible, when God gave his covenant to people, he would promise them things that were for their personal success, but it turned out God would also advance his own agenda when he fulfilled these promises. The individuals would receive the promises by faith for their own benefit, but in achieving the success that God promised, they would end up advancing God's program as well.

For example, God promised Abraham that he would have a son by his wife Sarah. Since they were both old and barren, it would take a miracle to make this happen. The promise was a gospel of healing, a gospel of health, and a gospel of miracles. Abraham wanted someone in his own bloodline to inherit from him. There was no indication that he had an ambition for the global spread of the kingdom of God and the gospel of Christ. He indeed gained insight about this, but at first he only wanted a son for himself.

God's promise was worded in such a way that it was for Abraham's benefit. He said that he would give Abraham a son, and that he would become the father of nations. God said that he would make Abraham's name great and famous.

This is a shock and a contradiction to how religious people imagine what God should say or what we should covet. They would expect God to say, "Abraham, I would hurt you and make you suffer for my glory." But God did not say that. God did not even say, "Abraham, I would heal you and make you a father of nations for my own glory and purpose." But God said, "Abraham, I will make you a father of nations and make your name great." This is the kind of gospel of health and wealth that the Faithless declare to be anti-Christian; however, it is the very foundation of the Christian faith.

Abraham would gain more insight concerning God's intention to make him the father of nations. Jesus said that Abraham foresaw the coming of Christ and rejoiced. However, at first Abraham was concerned only with his own barrenness, and God's promise referred to only how he would bless and honor Abraham. By faith, Abraham received the promise for his own benefit, for his own personal success and ambition. But by doing this, he became a pivotal point in the history of redemption. He made possible the nation of Israel and the incarnation of Christ, and therefore the salvation of humanity. All of this happened because God made a promise for Abraham's benefit and Abraham received it for his own benefit.

This same pattern is evident in the lives of others, including Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, and often neglected examples like Gideon and Samson. Also consider Rahab and Ruth. Rahab acted on her belief in God to save herself and her family. She did not have in mind the incarnation of Christ or the spread of the gospel. And Ruth only wanted to survive, marry a good husband, and care for her mother-in-law. Both of these women occupied vital roles in the history of redemption, even necessary roles to the incarnation and lineage of Christ. All of them pursued their own welfare and success, and God's promises to them even made them think along these lines, but they ended up advancing God's program at the same time.

The reason we mention this is to establish confidence to wholeheartedly receive good things from God for ourselves by faith. Pray for yourself. Receive things from God for your own benefit. If it stops there, God is honored because he has blessed one person. You can then consciously participate in the expansion of the kingdom of God. However, even if you do not concern yourself with the situation any further, you will naturally further God's program. He will take this and increase the effect to benefit more people and to magnify himself with it. Just by receiving from God for yourself, more and more, again and again, you will do more for God than the counterfeit Christians who seem to suffer much for their religion, but who refuse to receive from God and forbid others to receive. They hinder the gospel and bring shame to the name of Jesus.

Faithless theology instills a sense of guilt for praying for ourselves, or wanting good things for ourselves, or deliverance from problems for ourselves. It portrays faith toward God for personal benefit as selfish. But it is not up to us to judge God's word about healing and prosperity as morally repugnant, or the teachings of Jesus on faith and prayer as unspiritual. Judgment and contempt toward God is the true face of faithless religion. It is deception and foolishness. Your suffering often hinders God's program from moving forward. Why? Because you are stuck in your problems!

By God's design, if you do not make progress, then God's program does not make progress. God's will is for his plan to make progress by your progress. Humanity took one giant step closer to salvation when Abraham received the gospel of healing and prosperity for his own benefit. It was more progress than all the counterfeit Christians have ever made by their worthless and pretentious suffering, or by their sickness and poverty. It is utterly stupid to not receive from God. It is selfish to not receive healing and prosperity. When you suffer, you are not the only one who suffers. When you suffer, you cause many other people to suffer. When you do not receive healing and prosperity, when you refuse miracles and blessings, and answers to prayer, you inflict incalculable damage to multitudes.

God's program and our prosperity intertwine. God's program is about people in the first place, and we are the people. It is about us, and how we live in relation to him. It is never about him doing his own thing that has nothing to do with us. If it is by faith in God that we pursue our own welfare, and not by human greed and effort, then our success and happiness will never conflict with the plan of God. He will use our success, healing, and prosperity to advance his program, often in ways that we do not know or cannot anticipate.

Even when we seem to receive from God only for our own benefit, it could produce far-reaching effects that bless multitudes and generations long after we are gone. When God promises you something, he indeed wants you to receive it for your own benefit. It is for you even if it benefits nobody else. But if you receive it for yourself, it will indeed honor God and also benefit other people, even when that has not crossed your mind and even if you cannot imagine how it happens. God knows. And the more you receive from God, the more you will also advance his agenda. There is no conflict. There is a mutual and proportional benefit.

Nevertheless, do not think that he is just using you to help his own agenda. His agenda is about himself and about people. And so his agenda is him and you. When you pray to him and receive from him, that fits exactly into his agenda. This is it. It is exactly what life and faith ought to be about. He is not using you to help his agenda, because you are his agenda. He is not exploiting you to further his plan, because you are his plan. He is not giving you good things just because it will accomplish some other important thing, because you are that important thing. But when you receive from him by faith, you will also participate in proclaiming the goodness and faithfulness of God, and in spreading his benefits to other people who are also in his program to bless.

By faith, pray to God and receive from him whatever you need and whatever you want. Never let it bother you. Be shameless. This is the way God operates as he spreads his kingdom through the world and the generations. The gospel of blessing and success, healing and prosperity, signs and wonders, is the greatest force in the world to glorify God and to advance his program. God succeeds when his people succeed, because his program is achieved in his people and by his people.

THE ANTI-PROSPERITY SCAM

For those who have no faith in God and cannot make a living preaching the true gospel, they can make a living preaching a false gospel. They do that by speaking against the commands and promises of God, and against the powers of the Holy Spirit. Then they will obtain financial support from those who also have no faith, and who wish to believe a system that is contrary to the word of God.

The message of deliverance and victory that we proclaim about Jesus Christ requires faith to receive it, and it requires the power of God to fulfill it. The Faithless cannot handle this message because they cannot believe it and so the things that this message promises will never happen to them. So they change the message to accommodate their own unbelief and experience. And then they attack the true gospel.

False teachers attack the good news and preach bad news instead. They attack deliverance and preach bondage. They attack prosperity and preach suffering. They attack healing and preach sickness. They attack God's righteousness in the believer, and insist on man's sinfulness even in those who have supposedly believed, making the blood of Christ of no effect. The message of defeat and suffering, of sin and sickness, is a thoroughgoing counterfeit gospel. It is what a religion would be when there is no God in it.

This false gospel is lucrative. It can make a man's career. In fact, some preachers have received prosperity from men by preaching against prosperity from God. People who have no faith in God for prosperity would endorse a preacher who attacks faith in God for prosperity. They might endorse a preacher who claims that God has given us a cultural mandate to generate prosperity by human effort and hidden providence, but they would condemn someone who teaches prosperity by faith in God and by his obvious providence and miraculous power.

It is financially profitable to attack the prosperity gospel. Defending the orthodoxy of man is a reliable money-making scheme. The religious populace is full of unbelief toward God and full of pride about their own suffering. To manipulate unthinking and unbelieving religious people, a preacher only has to tag "prosperity" on any message or person that he wishes to attack, and he is guaranteed to gain a strong measure of support to feed his ego, and often a good sum of money along with it. A preacher can tag the word "prosperity" upon any promise of the gospel itself, and he can then speak against it with approval from the faithless religious crowd. Such a preacher offers the faithless an assurance that their unbelief is in fact piety.

The same is true for God's commands and promises concerning healing. A statement can come straight out of the mouth of Jesus, but when a preacher calls it "the gospel of healing" or "the gospel of health and wealth," then suddenly he can attack it to a cheering crowd throwing money at him. If he persists, he might secure a publishing contract and receive an evangelical award. The religious charlatans claim that they are preaching against heresy, but they are the ones running their own scam.

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

The Faithless do not believe the promises of God. They reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they pretend that they embrace it. More than anything, they wish to present themselves as the guardians of the faith. They consider themselves the defenders of orthodoxy, but this orthodoxy is nothing more than a religious system of human tradition. And by it, they undermine the truth of God and persecute those who possess true faith in the gospel. During the ministry of Christ, the Jews and Pharisees were among the Faithless. They opposed Jesus to defend their own human doctrines and traditions, and in the end they murdered him. Since that time, the Faithless also include multitudes who claim to be Christians, but who oppose the powers and promises of God at work in the world today.

One tactic of the Faithless is to spiritualize the promises of God, even when the statements carry no such restriction, and even when they explicitly refer to material things and include physical effects. For example, in one place Jesus said, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours." A faithless person might respond, "Yes, when we pray for spiritual things." Just before this statement on prayer, however, Jesus said that anyone who has faith can command a mountain to move into the sea. And we cannot say that he referred to a spiritual mountain, because he said it in connection with how he cursed a physical tree to death.

His words produced a physical miracle, and when his disciples mentioned it, Jesus answered that anyone who has faith can perform an even greater miracle, and anything that we ask in faith shall be granted. If we have faith, we can get anything from God, but if we are forced to choose, the emphasis in this context is on physical and material things. When the disciples asked Jesus why they failed in healing the sick and casting out demons, Jesus answered, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." It was the same teaching specifically applied to physical miracles such as healing the sick and casting out demons. He intended his teachings on faith and prayer for physical and material things. In another place, Jesus 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." He was referring to his miracles when he said this.

The Faithless spiritualize God's doctrines and promises because they wish to neutralize his words. They have no faith in God, but they wish to convince others that they have faith, and so they must destroy the gospel teachings that could expose them. When the gospel teaches about healing, the Faithless will claim that it refers to spiritual healing, so that no one will notice when they cannot receive or minister healing. The scam is simple. However, it does not work because the words and the contexts of the statements in Scripture make it impossible to spiritualize them. Jesus said that, if we have faith, we can move mountains and perform greater

miracles. We can heal the sick, cast out demons, and receive anything from God. A more honest approach for the Faithless would be for them to admit that they reject the words of God and the teachings of Christ, that they renounce the gospel. Anyone who follows Christ ought to renounce the Faithless. Renounce their scholarship. Renounce their traditions and rituals. Renounce their ecclesiastical system.

There is a more profound answer to the faithless tendency to spiritualize the commands and promises of God. Their attempt to spiritualize what they do not have faith to believe assumes a misconception of the spiritual, so that even if we allow them to spiritualize something in the word of God, it still would not produce the outcome that they wish.

The Faithless assume that the spiritual does not produce physical and material effects, or if you receive something that is spiritual, then it is restricted to the spiritual realm. This is an error that contradicts the heart of the biblical view of reality. Just because something is spiritual in origin or spiritual in nature does not mean that it is without physical or material effects.

God is a spirit, but he is the one who created everything that is physical. The spiritual is the metaphysical origin and foundation of the physical. The spiritual could exist without the physical, but the physical could not exist, and would have never existed, without the spiritual. These are not two eternal self-existing realities. The spiritual had always existed, but there was a point when the physical did not exist. God created the physical. God created the material. And even now, it is the spiritual that sustains and controls the physical. This is not speculation or some esoteric theory, but it is basic to the nature of God, of creation and providence, and the Christian view of reality.

Every physical miracle is spiritual in origin. The physical and material blessings of God are spiritual. Paul wrote that he did not want the Corinthians to be uninformed about spiritual things or spiritual gifts. Then he referred to the gifts of healing. Healing is a spiritual gift, but it has a physical effect. He referred to the working of miracles. In the Bible, we read about miracles that produced an abundant supply of oil and also of food that could feed thousands of people. The ability to work miracles is obviously not natural or physical in origin. It is spiritual, but it produces physical effects and material benefits, things like wealth and supplies.

Paul also referred to faith that can move a mountain. Faith is spiritual, but a mountain is physical. The apostle wrote about speaking in tongues. He said, "I thank my God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." This is a spiritual ability, not a natural ability. It is miraculous, and not done by effort or by learning. But it produces a constant stream of physical movements, and sounds that can be physically heard and recorded. In fact, Paul called his examples of spiritual gifts the demonstrations of the Spirit. Although the Holy Spirit is spiritual, and although his gifts and abilities are spiritual, he produces physical demonstrations. Spiritual things are what heal the sick and cast out demons, speak in tongues and walk on water, and transmute and multiply substances. Angels are spiritual, but they can strike down armies of human soldiers. The Spirit of God came upon Samson, and the man wielded unnatural and superhuman strength. Yet the Spirit of God is not a natural force.

The spiritual can perform or produce the physical and the material. In fact, spiritual power is the greatest physical power. Physical power can only do physical things, and even then it is limited, but spiritual power can do all things without limit. Spiritual power can perform physical feats and produce material benefits that physical power can never hope to achieve. What physical power can calm the sea in an instant? What physical technology can raise the dead? But when there is enough faith, which is spiritual, it can produce these physical effects and benefits by a mere word of command. The spiritual creates, sustains, controls, and dominates the physical.

The Bible declares that God has blessed us with "every spiritual blessing" in Christ. He has not given us only the spiritual blessing of the gift of healing or the spiritual blessing of the working of miracles or the spiritual blessing of speaking in tongues. Just these several spiritual things would be more than enough to satisfy our every physical demand. But God has done much more for us. He has given us all spiritual blessings, not just three or five or ten. All of them. This must be more than enough to produce all possible physical effects and material benefits we could desire or ask for, and even more than what we can imagine.

Jesus Christ is the answer to all your problems. And beyond your problems, he is the way to achieve all your hopes and dreams. You and God are partners together in this life. We can live well because we have spiritual power. Because we have spiritual power, we can remain immune to every disease even when the unbelievers and the faithless fall dead around us. Because we have spiritual power, we can prosper even when others become desperate and destitute. We can sow in the middle of a famine and still reap a harvest. This is unnatural, but by spiritual power we can compel the physical outcome that we desire. Jesus said that if a person has faith, he can command even an unnatural thing to happen – he can command a tree to be taken up by the roots and to be planted in the sea. When we have God's spiritual blessing, we can expect supernatural physical outcomes and benefits. And because we have spiritual power, we can experience success in preaching the gospel regardless of times and cultures, and regardless of opposition.

The spiritual creates, sustains, controls, and dominates the physical. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and because they are spiritual blessings, they are not subject to natural limitations and circumstances. They operate by a different law, that is, the law of faith. The spiritual blessing of prosperity would mean that God can make a person wealthy regardless of the state of the economy, and regardless of the person's credentials and connections. The spiritual blessing of healing would mean that God can make a person healthy regardless of the state of medical technology, regardless of the age of the individual, regardless of genetics, or any natural factor.

To say that a promise of healing in the Bible refers to "spiritual" healing becomes the strongest assertion of physical healing on the basis of that promise. If the fulfillment of the promise is spiritual, then it is a guarantee that it will bulldoze over every obstacle to secure the physical

healing. To receive healing on the spiritual level is to receive healing at the root of the whole person. The body cannot help but recover.

Is this difficult to understand? Does this sound farfetched? Think of it this way. Can a person sin and become corrupted at the root of his being, and it never shows up in his body in the form of disease, decay, and death? This was how death began in the first place. Spiritual death guarantees physical death. This is accepted even by the Faithless, but when we think about this in the other direction, it is rejected. You see? It is not because we are speaking of some esoteric and outrageous thing, but it is because faithless orthodoxy is a religion of death, and to this kind of religion, the chief heresy is faith and life. Yet the gospel of Jesus Christ is a doctrine of faith and life through and through.

The Faithless are carnal people who pretend to be spiritual. They do not know what they are saying when they spiritualize something, because they do not grasp the nature of the spiritual. When they twist the word of God to make a text spiritual, they use the term incorrectly, because a spiritual blessing would cover every physical aspect of the situation, and this is the opposite of what the Faithless wish to assert. They are eager to destroy all physical applications of a promise from God, and relegate it to the spiritual, in the sense that it is imperceptible or only ethical. This is so that no one will know that these people have no faith in God to receive anything from him.

But again, since the spiritual is in fact infinitely more able to produce physical effects and material benefits, the Faithless are misleading in how they use the term. When they claim that something is spiritual, they mean that it is allegorical or metaphorical, or more plainly, they mean that it is imaginary or false. When they claim that a promise of healing is spiritual, they do not expect any physical effect to come from it. However, spiritual healing would guarantee the most evident and comprehensive physical benefits. So to say that the promise is spiritual does not reflect their meaning. In reality, their claim is that when God promises to heal the sick or to answer prayer, the promise is allegorical or metaphorical -- he will not in fact heal the sick or answer prayer at all, in any sense. Their claim is that God's promise is imaginary and false. Their claim is that God's promise is a lie. This is the true face of faithless orthodoxy.

The Faithless should say that the teachings of Jesus on faith, prayer, healing, miracles, and all such things are literally false, and that they renounce Jesus Christ. This is the only way to express their true feelings on the matter, but it would also expose them as the enemies of Christ, that they do not follow him, and that they teach a false gospel, a false religion, and a false orthodoxy. They are not the religious elite that they want everybody to think that they are, but they are religiously and ethically the worst of the worst among all of humanity. Now if they make the gospel into an allegory and a metaphor, and if they think that it is imaginary and false, then there cannot be salvation for them. No one is saved by an allegory or a metaphor of salvation. No one is saved by an imaginary or a false promise. And no one is saved by making the word of God into a fantasy by calling it "spiritual"!

Since the spiritual creates, sustains, and controls the physical, if one rejects the physical effects that the gospel produces, then it must mean that he rejects the spiritual basis or root. That is, if a person rejects the doctrine of the creation of the physical world, it must mean that he also rejects the reality of the spiritual Being who performed the creation. Now if the gospel promises physical healing that comes from a spiritual power, and a person rejects the physical healing as a matter of doctrine and orthodoxy, then how can he claim to believe in the spiritual power? It means that a person who rejects the physical and material blessings of the gospel cannot claim to have faith in the spiritual blessings of the gospel. It means that if he rejects the physical and material blessings of the gospel, he is unspiritual and unbelieving. If a person rejects the spiritual blessing of healing, he is unspiritual. If a person rejects the spiritual blessing of financial prosperity, he is unspiritual. If a person rejects the spiritual blessings of speaking in tongues, visions and dreams, and signs and wonders, he is unspiritual. If he rejects the physical things that the spiritual things are said to produce, then he has rejected the spiritual things, and he himself is unspiritual. This is the necessary logical conclusion.

On the other hand, when we realize that every physical and material thing that we receive from God by faith is in fact spiritual, then we are delivered from any religious shame that the Faithless have imposed on us. Where there is every spiritual gift, we can also expect every physical demonstration. In the same way, because God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, we can expect every physical and material benefit. And because each physical and material benefit is in fact spiritual, every time we receive from God, it is a spiritual exercise. When we receive physical healing from God, it is a spiritual exercise that utilizes our knowledge of God and our faith in his word even in the face of extreme agony and deadly symptoms, and the intimidation that comes along with them. When we receive financial prosperity from God, it is a spiritual exercise of faith and action on the basis of our knowledge of the word of God. We have faith that God will prosper us and that he can prosper us regardless of the state of the economy or our specific circumstances. We walk by faith, not by sight. It is a spiritual exercise. It promotes fellowship with God and the study of his word. It erodes religious pride and pretension. It transforms frustration and resentment into thanksgiving. It establishes spiritual character and consistency. Receiving physical and material benefits from God by faith is one of the most spiritual things that anyone can do.