

Borders

Volume 2

VINCENT CHEUNG

Copyright © 2024 by Vincent Cheung
<https://www.vincentcheung.com>

CONTENTS

ASPECTS OF ESCHATOLOGY	4
THE CHIEF OF SINNERS	9
FAVOR: CLAIM IT BY FAITH	15
A HARVEST OF HEALING	19
AN UNFORGIVABLE CONSPIRACY	22
ATTACK ON FAITHLESS POVERTY	24
BECAUSE HE GOT CAUGHT	29
BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IT	33
FAITH: DOWN TO THE ROOTS	36
FROM ORIGIN TO DESTINY	39
GOD HAS VISITED HIS PEOPLE	42
GOD'S DWELLING PLACE	45
GREATER THAN CHARITY	47
HAPPINESS: THE PROMISE OF GOD	50
HAVE YOU RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT?	53
HEALING AND GOD'S COMPASSION	56
HEALING AND GOD'S LANGUAGE	60
HEALING AND GOD'S MERCY	62

HEALING AND GOD'S MISSION	64
HEALING AND GOD'S SALVATION	68
HEALING AND PETITION	72
HEALING: ITS CONTINUING RELEVANCE	74
HEALING: MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE	76
HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF STRONG	79
I WILL LIVE AND NOT DIE	85
IN THIS WORLD, WE WILL HAVE VICTORY	87
JOB: A REVELATION OF HEALTH AND WEALTH	89
MAKE HIM YOUR DWELLING PLACE	93
MIRACLES AND A PURE CHURCH	96
MORE FAITH, MORE MIRACLES	98

Aspects of Eschatology

Christian eschatology integrates three essential components: preterism, postmillennialism, and expansionism. Together, they form a coherent and victorious outlook on the history of redemption, the advance of God's kingdom, and the role of believers in the world. Instead of anticipating decline or retreat, it promotes active and triumphant engagement with God's plan as it unfolds, culminating in the glorious return of Christ.

Preterism refers to the fact that most of the prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled. In particular, many of the prophecies in the New Testament that are commonly assumed to be fulfilled in the future were actually fulfilled in the first century, especially in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem.

For example, the prophecies that many believe point to a future Great Tribulation actually describe the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. As Jesus said to the people at that time, "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place." He said that the fulfillment would occur in the first century.

This was a period of intense judgment and transition, marking the end of the old covenant era and the beginning of the new covenant age. Understanding the Great Tribulation in this historical context allows us to move forward with confidence, knowing that these events have been fulfilled and that we are now in the age of Christ's reigning kingdom. We are not waiting for trouble. We are working for progress.

Most of the prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled. However, the Bible aligns with partial preterism rather than full preterism. Full preterism is the heretical view that all prophecies have been fulfilled. There is nothing left. It is heresy because it denies essential doctrines such as the future return of Christ, the final resurrection, and the final judgment. Full preterism claims that these events have already taken place. But since the truth is that they have not yet taken place, full preterism effectively rejects these defining elements of the Christian faith.

Partial preterism provides a foundation for understanding the present role of the church. We are not awaiting some catastrophic end for the church. Instead, we recognize that Christ has triumphed over his enemies, and we are called to build on that victory as we advance his kingdom on earth. The knowledge that most prophecies have already been fulfilled empowers us to approach our mission with unwavering faith and courage. We are not living in anticipation of imminent destruction, but we are participating in the expansion of the victorious reign of Jesus Christ.

This perspective frees the church from an eschatology of doom and instead provides us with an eschatology of hope and progress. We do not need to prepare for some future tribulation; instead, we are to work towards the ongoing expansion of God's kingdom, secure in the knowledge that Christ's victory has been inaugurated.

Postmillennialism refers to the fact that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is advancing throughout history and will continue to grow until it fills the entire world. Contrary to the defeatist outlooks of premillennialism and amillennialism, Scripture teaches postmillennialism, which affirms that the gospel will ultimately bring about a time of peace, righteousness, and prosperity before the return of Christ.

The "millennium" is not necessarily a literal thousand-year period, but could be much longer. Some postmillennialists believe it represents the era of Christ's reign that began with his ascension and continues through the church's mission in the present age, while others see it as a future period of gospel success, righteousness, and peace on earth that will occur before Christ's return.

Postmillennialism gives us an optimistic view of history. While conflicts and challenges will arise, the ultimate outcome is the victory of Christ's kingdom. The church is called to be a beacon of light in the darkness, transforming society through the power of the gospel, and actively participating in the growth of Christ's kingdom.

Postmillennialism challenges the idea that the world is destined to spiral into hopelessness. We are to expect the growth of righteousness and the triumph of the gospel, leading to a time of widespread peace and blessing. Christ's reign is here and now, and his kingdom is destined to expand until it fills the earth. This expectation transforms how we live our daily lives, urging us to act in faith, hope, and power. We are not bystanders but active agents in God's unfolding plan, partnering with him to bring about his purpose for humanity and the world.

Some might argue that events such as world wars, natural disasters, and other tragedies contradict the postmillennial vision of progress. However, this only shows a lack of understanding. These events do not contradict or disprove postmillennialism. Postmillennialism envisions an extended period of gospel victory, during which the overall trajectory is positive, even if there are temporary setbacks and periods of decline. The advancement of Christ's kingdom is not a straight line. There are ups and downs, but the ultimate outcome is assured.

Postmillennialism is a very long term view, and the progress will mostly be gradual, with moments of darkness giving way to increasing light. While we acknowledge that suffering and evil persist in the world, we maintain that Christ's reign will continue to expand, and the gospel will ultimately bring about a time of peace, righteousness, and flourishing on a global scale.

Postmillennialism has practical implications for every believer. It means that our efforts to preach the gospel, to train disciples, to influence culture, and to work miracles are part of God's plan to extend his kingdom. This perspective encourages us to engage in all spheres of life, but especially the spiritual aspects, knowing that spiritual weapons are effective and will prevail. As Isaiah said, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Our mission is to labor faithfully, knowing that our work contributes to the progress and victory of the kingdom of Christ.

Eschatology does not stop at interpreting the past or envisioning the future. It also addresses what we are to do now. This is where the Bible's doctrine of expansionism comes in. Expansionism refers to the teaching that Christians are called to expand God's kingdom through preaching and miracles.

Christians from all walks of life are to participate, whether they are male or female, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. They are to expand God's kingdom to more places of the world through increasingly greater miracles. All Christians are active participants in God's plan, bringing every area of life under the authority of Christ.

Expansionism emphasizes the manifestation of God's power. Christians are to transform culture and society not by political and economic maneuvers, but by spiritual methods such as preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and working various miracles by faith and by the Holy Spirit.

Against the heresy of cessationism, which denies the continuation of supernatural gifts and miracles, expansionism teaches that the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit should not only continue but also exponentially increase in power and frequency.

Jesus said that anyone who believes in him can do the same miracles he did and even greater miracles than he did. More power.

Joel prophesied that God would pour out his Spirit upon all kinds of people, and not only on the likes of kings and prophets. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord can receive the Holy Spirit and experience supernatural power, including healing, prophecy, visions and dreams, and all kinds of miracles. More people.

Jesus also said that we would receive power once the Holy Spirit has come upon us, and then we would be his witnesses, starting with Jerusalem to the end of the earth. More places.

And Peter said that the promise was made to those who heard him, and to their descendants, and to as many as God would call. More periods.

Expansionism is the basic gospel program, that there would be more power, in more people, to more places, through more periods. It is one pillar of the discipleship program of Jesus and the very meaning of the Great Commission. And it is the functional aspect of biblical eschatology. Thus to deny any aspect of expansionism to any degree is to oppose the program of the gospel. It is to become an enemy of the Christian faith.

In this way, expansionism supports postmillennialism by providing the practical means through which the kingdom of Christ advances. We are to expect greater things as we exercise faith and work to see God's kingdom expand. We are not waiting for defeat. We are moving from victory to victory. It is necessary to emphasize that the kingdom grows not only through the preaching

of the gospel but also through the demonstration of the Spirit's power by miracles that are increasing in intensity and frequency.

People who disagree with the biblical doctrine of expansionism are faithless and worthless. They are disobedient losers and spiritual garbage. When our experience does not measure up to the teachings of the gospel, they would lower the standard so that it seems like God already approves of our performance. Instead, we should admit that we do not live up to the standard, and trust in God's grace to keep improving.

Instead of criticizing those of us who hold out the truth, they should join us and pray with us, so that we may improve together. But faithless and worthless losers do not want to do that. They want to remain proud and comfortable. So when they do not yet live up to something that the Bible teaches, they want to claim that the Bible does not teach it. Many of these people have never believed in Jesus, so of course they would think this way.

The integration of preterism, postmillennialism, and expansionism provides a unified vision of victory, progress, and action. Preterism grounds our eschatological understanding in historical fulfillment, showing that many prophecies have already been accomplished. Postmillennialism provides the theological framework for expecting the ongoing and expanding victory of Christ's kingdom. Expansionism calls believers to participate in the process, and to do it by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

This eschatology rejects the defeatist mentality of other systems that expect decline or retreat. Instead, it provides a basis for us to rise up in faith and engage in the mission of expanding God's kingdom. It also rejects damnable faithless doctrines and assumptions, exemplified in cessationism, that undergird false interpretations of the history of redemption and the mission of the church.

We have been given the victory in Christ, and our task is to enforce that victory in every area of life, by our faith and by the power of the Spirit of God. Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. This emboldens us to move forward, for we know that nothing can stop the advance of God's kingdom.

This vision of victory, progress, and action calls every believer to take their place in God's unfolding plan. We are not spectators. We are participants in a divine mission that spans all of history and culminates in Christ's ultimate triumph. Indeed, Christ has already triumphed, but he will prove it more and more, and more and more people will know it and admit it.

This is the mindset that should characterize every Christian – an unshakeable conviction that we are part of a winning cause, empowered by the Spirit to bring transformation and light to a dark world.

Christian eschatology provides a victorious vision for the present age. Preterism ensures that we interpret prophecy accurately, instead of waiting for cataclysmic events that already

happened hundreds of years ago. Postmillennialism gives us confidence in the progress of the gospel and the growth of Christ's kingdom. Expansionism challenges us to participate in that growth by preaching with power, healing the sick by faith, and performing all kinds of miracles by the Holy Spirit.

Together, these elements form a theology of victory, empowering Christians to engage the world with faith, optimism, and expectation of God's power increasingly manifesting until Christ's return. This biblical system of eschatology gives believers both confidence and direction, providing a clear path forward as we live out our calling in the present age.

We are called to be agents of transformation, moving forward in the assurance that Christ reigns and that his kingdom will increasingly triumph over all opposition. As we labor in faith, we know that our work is not in vain, and that God's power is at work in us to fulfill his glorious purpose for the world. One day, all creation will witness the glorious culmination of his redemptive plan, and we will rejoice in the everlasting victory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Chief of Sinners

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (1 Timothy 1:15)

The consensus of human orthodoxy is that Paul called himself a sinner even after his conversion to Christ. In fact, he considered himself the chief of sinners, or the worst of sinners, even after he became a Christian. So even after his conversion, he was still worse than the worst reprobate. This is both a matter of reality and humility. The Christian, it is said, indeed continues to be a sinner, and he ought to acknowledge this in humility. The application is that Christians ought to continue calling themselves sinners, although they affirm that they have been born again and justified by faith. This view is almost universal in Christian literature, and more or less reflected in many Bible translations. It is rarely challenged due to religious tradition, faithless inclinations, and a contempt for the blood of Christ. However, it appears impossible to those who have a basic familiarity of the New Testament, and especially of Paul's writings.

Paul said to the Corinthians, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." The Christian is a new creation. He is not merely renewed, or covered, or forgiven. He is something new. And the old does not remain with the new, because Paul added, "The old has passed away." He continued, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In Paul's teaching on salvation, there is no notion that we are sinners saved by grace, who remain sinners after being saved by grace. Here is his description of what happens when a person benefits from the sacrifice of Christ. He becomes "the righteousness of God."

Accordingly, Paul referred to Christians as "saints" in his letters. It is often suggested that the Christian is both sinner and saint. There is much biblical evidence to the contrary. As we have seen, Paul said the Christian is a new creation, and the old has passed away. In another place, he wrote, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with wickedness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?" The statement addresses partnership or association with unbelievers, but notice what he calls each group. There is no mixture between the two. You are either righteousness or wickedness. You are either light or darkness. You cannot be both at the same time. Jesus is not both Christ and Satan at the same time. The Christian is not both righteousness and wickedness at the same time.

The popular view would think that the non-Christian is wickedness, and when he becomes a Christian, righteousness is added to the wickedness, and perhaps dominates it. From that point on he is both sinner and saint. This is unbiblical and impossible. If you follow Jesus Christ, you are a saint of God, and you cannot be a sinner at the same time. Paul made this contrast when he said, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." Adam made us sinners, Christ made us saints.

In fact, "sinner" is a technical term that refers to someone outside of the covenant community. A sinner is someone that the covenant members regard as an outsider, a reject. It is like how we use the word "unbeliever." Both Christians and non-Christians may have unbelief, but a Christian who doubts is never referred to as an unbeliever. The word is reserved exclusively to those who have not believed in Christ. If I call someone an unbeliever, you would assume that I think he is unsaved, and that he would burn in hell. Likewise, both Christians and non-Christians may commit sins. We call the non-Christian a sinner. We must not call the Christian a sinner.

The non-Christian is called a sinner even if he is not known to have committed any particular sin. If there are instances where a Christian is called a sinner rhetorically, or for effect, they are certainly exceptions that prove the rule. If there are exceptions at all, there are far fewer than you might think. Someone asked me about a passage in the letter of James that seemed to contradict what I said about the correct mindset of a Christian. I replied that in the verses immediately above, James was referring to people who would commit murder to seize what they wanted. Don't grab a word or phrase in the Bible that seems to say what you want and throw it at people. Study the context. Now if there are instances where you want to call yourself an unbeliever, a non-Christian, a God-hater, and a Christ-denier, then it would also be correct to call yourself a sinner. If you are these other things, then indeed you are a sinner, and not a saint or a believer at all.

The Greek word "protos" is often translated "worst" in our text. However, the word does not inherently convey the meaning of worst or moral inferiority. The word can mean first in time, in order or place, in importance, or in prominence. It is translated "worst" only because an interpretation has been assigned to Paul's statement. To translate the word "chief" is technically acceptable, but someone who is the chief of sinners might sound as wicked as someone who is the worst of sinners. The word "foremost" might be a better translation, but given the assumptions that readers have imposed upon the verse for so many centuries, it might as well take on the meaning of "worst." The context indicates that Paul meant he was the foremost sinner in the sense that he was the most prominent one, as in the most conspicuous and the most noticeable convert, the opposite of obscure and insignificant.

He likely had in mind what he said to the Galatians about his visit to Jerusalem. He wrote, "And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, 'He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God because of me." Many people had heard of him before they met him in person. He was famous for hating the gospel and persecuting the churches. Then he was dramatically converted and redirected his zeal, now fueled by the Holy Spirit, to declare that Jesus Christ was the Messiah predicted by the prophets. All those who heard this marveled. Paul became the poster boy of converts. This was what he meant when he said, "Christ came to save sinners, among whom I am foremost." He became the mascot of grace. One translation has Paul calling himself "the worst of them all," but in the next verse, it translates the same word for "worst" into "the prime example." Given the context, the same word could be

translated "foremost" in both instances, and the meaning would be "most notable" or "prime example" in both instances.

We could discuss whether his sins were the worst in terms of how wicked they were. He was certainly one of the worst kinds of sinners. He was a faithless religionist who rejected the gospel, and insisted on his own tradition and orthodoxy. Jesus condemned the religious hypocrites. They claimed to serve God, but persecuted those who had faith in God's promises and expected to receive from him. Cessationists, for example, claim to be servants of God, but they attack those who obey what Scripture says about healing the sick and speaking in tongues. Like the Pharisees, some of them even blaspheme the Holy Spirit when they declare that those who heal the sick and speak in tongues today are deceived or demonic. Faithless religionists also present themselves as scholars of God's word, but they condemn God's promises concerning success and prosperity, opposing teachings from the gospel that could save entire nations from suffering and poverty. In any case, Paul likely did not have in mind whether he was the worst. His emphasis was that he became a mascot for the gospel, a most notable display of grace.

Imagine an atheist intellectual who thinks that his mission in life is to destroy faith in God, and to turn the world against Christianity in particular. He writes books and goes on speaking tours. He is interviewed on radio and television. He challenges Christians to debates. He establishes nonprofit societies to promote atheism. He has become one of the most famous thinkers in the world, known not just for his intellectual prowess, but also for his malice and bitterness as he speaks about the things of God. Atheists around the globe look to him as their mentor and champion. Then one day this atheist intellectual is converted. He renounces atheism and bows to Jesus Christ. He redirects his zeal toward promoting faith in God and refuting atheism, only now his efforts carry a sense of otherworldly power and joy. The hatred and resentment, which oozed from him wherever he went, have disappeared. He writes books and goes on speaking tours. He is interviewed on radio and television. He challenges atheists to debates. He establishes nonprofit societies to promote Christianity. He stands on the notoriety he has already earned and flips the whole thing to make it serve God. He is no longer an atheist. He was probably never the worst atheist. But he is the foremost converted atheist. He is the prime example, the poster boy, the mascot of hardened atheists who have been converted to Christ.

This is like what Paul meant when he said that Christ came to save sinners, of whom he was the foremost, the chief, or the prime example. He became the mascot of grace. He was not the worst of sinners, and he was no longer a sinner at all. He was a most notable example of someone who stopped being a sinner, and who was no longer a sinner because of the grace of God. This is supported by the context. In the previous verses, Paul said that he was "formerly a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent." He called himself an arrogant, spiteful, and violent opposer of the Christian faith. He was no longer a blasphemer and persecutor. He was no longer arrogant and violent against the Christian faith. Thus when he counted himself among the sinners that Christ came to save, he was referring to his past self as a sinner, not his present self. He did not say, "I am a thief, pervert, liar, and so on, but Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Rather, he said, "I was a blasphemer and persecutor, but Christ came to save

sinners, of whom I am chief." He listed his sins, but he listed only sins he committed before his conversion, so when he counted himself among the sinners, he was referring to his past self as a sinner.

The Bible says, "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

The Law was a shadow of the things to come. If the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins, they would have removed the consciousness of sins in the people. The people would no longer feel like sinners or think that they were still sinners. Instead of removing the sense of sin, these sacrifices reminded them of their sins. But then Christ came. He was the reality that the Law foreshadowed. Now if the blood of Christ still failed to remove the consciousness of sin, if the people still feel like sinners or think of themselves as sinners, this would mean that the blood of Christ was not any more effective or valuable than the blood of bulls and goats. Either that, or Christ did not shed his blood for these particular people in the first place, and their sins were never washed away. The blood of Christ actually reminds them of their sins, because they regard it as no better than the blood of animals. When Christ is preached to unbelievers, it makes them aware of their sins, because they have never been washed. When Christ is preached to believers, it makes them aware of their righteousness, because they have been washed.

So the view that Christians should continue to carry a sense of sin and to call themselves sinners, is a blasphemous and reprobate position. Again, if the blood of Christ was effective in atoning for sin and washing away sin, and if the blood of Christ was better than the blood of animals, then Christians should no longer carry a consciousness of sin. The position that Christians are still sinners and that they should continue to think of themselves as sinners amounts to insisting that the blood of Christ was no better than the blood of animals, that Christ himself was no better than an animal. One of the greatest sins you can commit is to call yourself a sinner after God has recreated you and washed you by the blood of his own Son. If you want to become the worst of sinners, this would be a good way to start.

It is because of their unbelief, tradition, and false humility that people insist they are still sinners even after they have supposedly been born again. Their consciousness of their sinfulness is stronger than their consciousness of Christ's righteousness. Their feelings about themselves, even false feelings about themselves, are stronger than their feelings about Christ. Often, their feelings do not have anything to do with Christ. All their feelings are about themselves, when the fact is they should not have so much feelings about themselves at all. One of the greatest sins is to call yourself a sinner after you have supposedly received Jesus Christ, because it amounts to calling the blood of Christ no better than blood of animals. You

think you are calling yourself sinful, and feeling very humble and romantic about it, but you are calling Jesus useless and worthless.

Who do I think I am? I am the righteousness of God. I was a sinner, but that sinner was crucified with Christ on the cross and died. What do I feel? I feel righteous. I feel the righteousness of God as my own righteousness. That is how righteous I feel that I am. I do not feel my own righteousness or sinfulness at all. Why? That man had died. As Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Someone who knows that he is the righteousness of God can have a sensitive conscience. When he sins, he is pricked in his heart. His sense of righteousness, which is the righteousness of God, stands in stark contrast to any sin. His conscience is even more sensitive and accurate than when he played humble and called himself a sinner.

Rather than bragging about how sinful he is, so that people can marvel at his religious humility, and rather than wallowing in depression due to his stumbling, he confesses his sins and receives forgiveness. He trusts in the blood of Christ, who once for all offered sacrifice for his sins. The feeling of supreme righteousness, the righteousness of God, returns to full force and clarity in him. John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The righteousness of God is not only a formal provision, but it is a present reality in the believer that determines his position before God, before Satan, and before the world. It is a reality that anchors his faith and his feeling. This is the sense of righteousness that fuels the confidence to preach the gospel, to heal the sick, and to cast out demons. When you are right, you are bold. But the rightness that you know and feel is the rightness of Christ. Compare this kind of life that centers the consciousness on the righteousness of God to the one that centers on the insistence on an identity of sinner, regardless of what Jesus had done in his death and resurrection. A man who affirms and feels an identity of sinner still has himself as the center of his universe. He is keeping alive someone who ought to have died on the cross.

We have focused on one statement, indeed the foremost verse, the prime example of a verse that Christians use to call themselves sinners. If there are other verses that they use, you will see that they are also mishandled once you examine them with the theological and textual context in mind. If you have faith in Christ, who shed his blood for you, how should you think of yourself, and how should you talk about yourself? God has given you an example in the apostle Paul. He was the most notable example of a sinner who repented and followed Jesus. Even someone like him could be saved and transformed. The blood of Christ washed away the consciousness of sin. True humility acknowledges the work of grace. True faith affirms the radical transformation that happened when God spoke light into our hearts and destroyed the darkness that was there.

So now we must say with Paul, "All things have passed away, and all things have become new. I am a new creation. I am the righteousness of God. The man that I was, a sinner, was crucified with Christ. Now Jesus Christ lives in me." This sense of righteousness infuses us with courage

to live the gospel. There is no excuse for weakness and sinfulness. The false teaching that Christians are sinners has been one of the most damaging in Christian history, perpetuating weakness and defeat, and unsurprisingly, fueling continual sinfulness. The one who continues to call himself a sinner also continues to sin, because he expects it of himself, and he wants you to expect it of him. Perhaps that is his true motive, to continue in sin? We declare that Christians are saints and not sinners, and that they are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. And we expect Christians to live up to all of this by the power of God that works in them.

Favor: Claim It by Faith

God favors us. This is the starting point of all blessings, opportunities, and advancements that we experience. It is not something we earn or merit, but it flows from God's sovereign grace. Before we ever sought him, he had already decided to show us favor, choosing to reveal his love and goodness to us through Jesus Christ.

The faith in our hearts is evidence that the grace of God is working in us. Faith cannot be generated by our willpower, but it is a gift that God decides to give. So if you have faith in Jesus Christ, it is evidence that God has decided to favor you. As the Bible says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing, but it is the gift of God. It is not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

God's favor manifests his desire to uplift and empower us in all areas of life, and this divine favor is meant to be a constant source of strength and joy. His favor does not stop at salvation. It extends beyond our spiritual transformation and continues to influence every aspect of our lives. The sovereignty of God encompasses all circumstances, including the hearts of people. He is able to cause others to show us favor, orchestrating events for our good. His favor is active in every situation, whether in our relationships, our workplaces, or our communities.

The Bible includes many examples of God's favor shaping the lives of his people. Joseph, for instance, found favor not only with Potiphar but also with the prison warden after being falsely accused. God's hand was at work, guiding Joseph to a place of influence and authority in Egypt. Similarly, we read of Daniel, Nehemiah, and Esther, all of whom experienced favor from those in power as a result of God's arrangement. These instances are not mere historical records. They illustrate a timeless principle that God is able to move on our behalf, influencing others for our benefit.

The Bible affirms this truth: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he directs it wherever he pleases." This same divine favor surrounds those who are righteous, protecting them like a shield. God's favor is not just for the few, but it belongs to all who walk in faith, and it serves as a divine advantage in circumstances that might seem insurmountable by human standards.

Isaiah prophesied that when God grants favor, "Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall serve you." This image conveys the power of divine favor to bring about unexpected and even unnatural assistance and opportunities. God's favor is a supernatural force, breaking through limitations and providing access to blessings that human effort alone cannot achieve. When we face challenges that seem impossible, God's favor opens doors that would otherwise remain closed.

This favor is our inheritance as children of God. It is available to us by faith, and it can turn around even the most dire of situations. Joseph's journey from slavery to becoming second-in-command of Egypt is a profound example of this. What appeared to be setbacks were actually

steps toward his divinely appointed destiny. His story reminds us that no matter how bleak the circumstances, God's favor is capable of transforming our situation into something glorious.

We are called to claim God's favor in our lives by faith. Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." We can confidently ask God for favor in specific situations, trusting that he hears us. As we pray, our words should reflect the certainty of his answer. We might say, "I claim favor in my work, in the name of Jesus. God is on my side. He arranges all things for my benefit and gives me the advantage in every situation."

Claiming favor by faith is often strengthened by taking action. We can walk in confidence, reflecting our belief that God's favor is at work in our lives. Even when faced with challenges, we should not be shaken. Joseph encountered betrayals and setbacks, but each obstacle only brought him closer to God's purpose for his life. In the same way, God's favor will ensure that no opposition can derail his plans for us.

Nevertheless, while God can cause others to favor us, our confidence must rest in him alone. Not everyone has to like us. Not everyone needs to approve of us for us to succeed. God's favor is the decisive factor. As the Bible says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" With God's favor on our side, no opposition can stand in the way of our success.

Consider David, who faced Goliath when others doubted him. It was not human approval that gave David the victory, but it was God's favor and power. This same principle applies to us today. God's favor defines us, and with it, we can move forward with boldness, even in the face of opposition and disapproval. David's confidence was in God's abilities and in God's favor to lead him to victory. This kind of confidence should characterize our lives as well.

Of course, when we talk about favor, we are not talking about a force in itself, but we are putting a label on specific things that God does for us, aligning circumstances, people, and opportunities for our good and for his glory. Living with the awareness of this favor inspires confidence and gratitude. It is not limited by our present circumstances or the limitations of others. It breaks through barriers, removes obstacles, and brings about his purposes in our lives. As Isaiah declared, "'No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment you shall refute. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from me,' declares the Lord."

The favor of God assures us that we can walk confidently, knowing that our success is secure in his hands. Paul reminds us that "God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." This promise should embolden us to live courageously, dream big, and expect great things for the future. God's favor can result in many material blessings, but in addition to that, it can also provide the resources, strength, and opportunities needed to fulfill his purpose for our lives.

Esther's story illustrates that God's favor can place us in positions of influence, even when circumstances seem dire. God's favor can elevate us to places of authority and enable us to accomplish what we could never achieve on our own. Esther's courage to approach the king, despite the potential consequences, was rooted in her understanding of God's favor upon her life. It is a reminder that while challenges will come, they are also opportunities for God to demonstrate his power and faithfulness.

Another example of God's favor is seen in the life of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king of Persia, and when he heard about the ruined state of Jerusalem, his heart was moved to take action. He sought God's favor before approaching the king with his request to rebuild the city. God granted him favor, and not only was his request granted, but the king also provided him with the resources and protection needed to complete the task. Nehemiah's story shows that when we seek God's favor, he can move the hearts of those in authority to support his plans for us.

The favor of God often manifests in unexpected ways. Sometimes, it comes through the kindness of strangers or the opening of opportunities that seem impossible. At other times, it is the inner peace and strength that allows us to persevere through trials and to achieve success and prosperity. Paul experienced God's favor in the midst of hardship. Despite facing persecution, imprisonment, and various challenges, he could say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This strength was a result of God's favor, empowering him to fulfill his calling despite the obstacles.

God's favor is not limited to moments of triumph. It can even work miracles, and it is also present in our times of struggle. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to bow to an idol, they experienced the favor of God in a miraculous way. The Bible tells us that not a hair on their heads was singed, and they emerged from the fire unharmed. God was their protection, and it demonstrated his power to those who witnessed it. God can sustain us even in the most intense trials, proving that he is with us and that his power is greater than any threat we face.

God's favor also influences our relationships. Favor can lead to reconciliation, restoration, and the establishment of meaningful connections. When Jacob feared meeting his brother Esau after years of estrangement, he prayed for God's favor. When they finally met, Esau embraced Jacob, and their relationship was restored. This was a result of God's favor, softening Esau's heart and bringing about peace. In our own lives, we can trust that God's favor will work in our relationships, bringing healing where there has been hurt and unity where there has been division.

Another important aspect of favor is how it empowers us to be a blessing to others. God's favor is given for us even if it is not shared with others, but he indeed wants his blessings to overflow in our lives so that we can bless others also. Abraham was blessed with such overabundance that he could be a blessing to others, and through him, all nations were to be blessed. When we walk in God's favor, we become conduits of his love, grace, and provision to others. Whether it

is through acts of kindness, generosity, preaching the gospel, and working miracles, God enables us to extend his kingdom and make a difference in the world.

God's favor brings about divine alignment. He places us in the right place at the right time, connecting us with the right people. Ruth's story is an example of this. After the death of her husband, Ruth chose to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and return to Israel. Ruth's loyalty and faithfulness positioned her to receive God's favor. She found herself gleaning in the fields of Boaz, who would eventually become her redeemer and husband. Through this union, Ruth became part of the lineage of Jesus Christ. God's favor not only blessed Ruth but also played a crucial role in his greater redemptive plan.

The favor of God is available to all who believe, and it is an unstoppable force that works for our success and prosperity. It is God himself orchestrating events for our good, ensuring that no obstacle is too great and no situation too difficult. As we grow in the knowledge of his favor, we will live with a deeper sense of purpose, aware that every step is guided and blessed by him.

God's favor will drive you forward. It will inspire you to greatness and courage to fulfill your divine destiny. With God, nothing is impossible, and the best is yet to come. Expect God's favor to manifest in every area of your life – your work, your relationships, your health, and your ministry. He is aligning everything for your good. Walk with the confidence that comes from knowing you are favored by the Creator of the universe.

God's favor is not a fleeting blessing. It is a continual reality for those who walk in faith. Use it as the force that encourages you to dream bigger, take bold steps, and trust God in every circumstance. As you live in the awareness of his favor, you will see his hand at work, opening doors, providing resources, and turning obstacles into opportunities. With God's favor, you are empowered to fulfill your purpose and to be a testimony of his goodness to the world.

The best is truly yet to come, for with God's favor, we are not limited by what we see. We are part of his divine plan, and he delights in blessing his children. His favor will carry us through every season of life and lead us into the fullness of his promises.

A Harvest of Healing

Jesus told his disciples that he had come to teach them the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. He explained that he taught in parables because his followers were granted this knowledge, but those who did not have faith in him would be unable to grasp it. In one of these parables, he said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows. He does not know how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Here Jesus explained the growth and the power of God's kingdom, and how the word of God operates in the lives of believers and in the unfolding of God's purposes on earth. The farmer in this parable is a simple figure. He scatters seed and goes about his days, rising and resting, watching over his field without an understanding of the intricate processes at work beneath the soil. He lacks detailed knowledge of germination, photosynthesis, and growth. He does not need to grasp any of these complexities, for his role is simply to sow the seed. The work of transformation, of turning a dormant grain into a lush harvest, belongs not to the farmer but to the earth, or more precisely, to God who causes the growth.

This is an apt analogy for how God's kingdom grows and how spiritual life and power manifest in our world. As followers of Christ, we are called to scatter the seed, or the word of God. The process of transformation is unseen, but it is real. It happens beyond our perception, and we do not know everything about how it happens, but it leads inexorably to a full and glorious harvest. Although the farmer is an active participant in the sowing, he is a mere observer of the growth. And he is thankful for the life that God brings forth without his direct effort and knowledge.

This dynamic applies to the word of God in all its operations. Whether it is the preaching of the gospel that brings someone to salvation or the promises of Scripture that produce righteousness and development in a believer, the power is not in human skill or effort. The power lies in the word of God. It is a living seed with the capacity for growth and abundance. The word of God contains within itself the principle of life. The farmer sleeps, but the seed does not sleep. The word of God is constantly working and growing.

The expansion of the kingdom is a process. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain. This is an ordered progression, and the wise farmer respects this progression. He does not rush the blade to become the full ear prematurely, nor does he despair when he sees no immediate results. He waits patiently. He knows that the seed, when planted in good soil, is sure to bring forth its fruit in due time. The process may be hidden and gradual, but it is always moving toward fulfillment. In the same way, when the word of God is sown into the hearts of men, it is always at work, always moving toward the manifestation of God's purpose. The kingdom of God advances not through human striving but through divine power. Nevertheless, things often happen instantly, because after all, it is a miracle seed.

Since the parable of the seed describes how the things of the kingdom and the word of God work in general, we can apply it to the matter of healing. Jesus spoke of the seed and the harvest. This can guide our thinking about the supernatural work of healing in our lives and in the lives of those to whom we minister. Whether we are trusting God for healing in our own bodies or ministering to others, we can understand the dynamic of planting and nurturing the seed of God's word.

When seeking healing from God, some people fall into the error of straining and striving, as if the healing were something we could produce by our own willpower or concentration. But just as the farmer cannot make the seed grow by force of will, we cannot produce healing by human effort. Our part is to sow the seed, to nurture it, to confess the word of God and to trust in its power. The seed that we are called to sow is the word of God, and specifically, the teachings and promises on healing found in Scripture.

We can scatter these seeds in our own hearts, and we can scatter them in the hearts of those who listen to us. When we speak the word of God concerning healing, we are planting seeds of faith. The Bible says, "He forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases," and it says, "He himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses." And it says many other things about healing. These are seeds. When planted in the soil of a receptive heart, they have the power to produce a harvest of healing.

The farmer does not exert effort to force the seed to grow. He simply plants it and nurtures it. The growth happens by the power of God. The word of God is doing the work. We do not have to understand all the mechanics of how healing comes, just as the farmer does not understand how the seed sprouts and grows. What we must understand is that the word of God itself contains the power. It is God who exerts the effort. It is his word that is active and living. There is no strain, no exhaustion, no burden on our part. The healing does not come from our willpower or fleshly energy. We are merely the sowers and caretakers of the seed.

Many seeds of healing will come to full harvest instantly, but there might be nothing wrong even if it seems to be a process. When that happens, undergird your faith with patience. Do not let your faith falter. Do not assume that the seed is dead. Keep nurturing the seed by talking and thinking about the word of God. The farmer does not plant the seed and panic if there is not a full harvest the next hour. He allows time for the growth. He is confident in the unseen life and power of the seed. We can expect healing to come quickly, even instantly. As I said, it is a miracle seed after all. But if for some reason it does not happen as you wanted, do not panic. That would only make it worse, or even choke the seed altogether. Continue to nourish the seed with the word of God.

Patience is not to be underestimated. It can lead to great miracles. Refuse to be swayed by appearances or delays. The farmer does not dig up the seed every day to check if it is growing. He trusts the seed and the process. Likewise, we must not uproot the seed of God's word with words of doubt or fear. And we must not give up and walk away. We must hold fast to our confession of faith, knowing that God is faithful, and his word will not fail. Nevertheless, do not

allow patience to become an excuse. If the seed is alive, it must bring forth fruit. Healing must happen.

The word of God carries within it the divine power to bring itself to pass. This is the chief principle in the ministry of healing. Even if you forget everything about the gifts of the Spirit and the laying on of hands, if you will preach the word of God, you can have the most effective, the most effortless, and the most enduring harvest of miracles. Preach the word, then water it with explanation and encouragement, and it will produce in those who believe. No further effort is required from you. This is one of the secrets of the kingdom. It is the key to a ministry of miracles.

An Unforgivable Conspiracy

And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who SPEAKS a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who SPEAKS against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come....I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every CARELESS word they SPEAK, for by your WORDS you will be justified, and by your WORDS you will be condemned. (Matthew 12:31-32, 36-37)

The standard orthodox definition of the unpardonable sin is that it refers to a knowing, deliberate, and persistent rejection of Jesus Christ. This is obviously a lie, since Jesus defined it as a sin committed by speaking words, and that by speaking words against the Holy Spirit, not against Jesus.

Further, as the context indicates, the immediate application of the doctrine is to what a person says about the works of the Spirit in supernatural and miraculous things such as healing the sick and casting out demons. It is inevitably also applied to prophecies, visions, and speaking in tongues, since Scripture specifies these as the demonstrations of the Spirit as well. The context also indicates that the sin can be committed even by speaking against the Holy Spirit in relation to these things indirectly and carelessly.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit receives sharper emphasis and greater coverage in the Gospels, and in more vivid language, than the doctrines of election, baptism, and communion. However, it is the single most distorted, rejected, and neglected major doctrine in the history of the church. All who call themselves Christians, even when they disagree on other things to the point of violence, somehow unite against Jesus on this doctrine.

When this sin is mentioned at all, it is to assure people that they have not committed it. However, Jesus never offered any assurance in connection to this sin. He presented it only as a threat and danger, and as a sin that is possible, even easy, to commit. He never said not to worry about it. He never said not to be afraid. He never said it is difficult to commit or unlikely to happen. He mentioned it so that people would be alarmed about it and avoid committing this unforgivable offense. Instead of dismissing it, we are to increase the concern about it.

Historic orthodoxy insists on an unbiblical definition of this sin, a definition that blatantly contradicts and renounces what Jesus said, as if to disown Jesus himself. The false definition is itself blasphemy, defrauding the reverence that Jesus insisted we must offer to the Spirit of God.

The common definition of this sin is an evasion. It is an attempt to replace the doctrine rather than to explain it. It is dishonest and unintelligent. It portrays centuries of theologians and believers as practically illiterate to have held on to such an absurd definition that is obviously false, and that directly contradicts what the text teaches. It offers misguided hope, and a deadly assurance. Moreover, because it conspires against Jesus' doctrine and warning, diverting

attention away from his true meaning, historic orthodoxy makes it more likely for people to commit this sin. Anyone who affirms the false definition becomes complicit in the eternal damnation of many.

In fact, it seems undeniable that some of the preachers, theologians, and religious people who assume the false view of the doctrine have committed the sin themselves. They have spoken against the Holy Spirit in even more explicit and vicious ways than those who triggered the original warning from Jesus. They have done so with full access and knowledge of what Jesus said about this, making them even worse than the original offenders. They purport to teach God's people and oppose heretics, but they themselves have never been Christians, and they can never become Christians. They can never be forgiven, and they can never be saved. They will burn in hell.

Attack on Faithless Poverty

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30)

Jesus rebuked people for their lack of faith, even when they were sick and poor. Their suffering did not stop him from highlighting the issue. The Faithless would condemn this as cruel, but they would not say this about Jesus because they are hypocrites. They pretend to agree with Jesus, but their hearts are far from him. So they persecute those who repeat the teaching of Jesus. But the teaching is not cruel. Jesus did not patronize the people, even the unrefined and the uneducated. He did not assume that they would never understand, or that they could never walk in faith.

How could they believe, if no one told them the truth? Jesus told them the truth. He told them the truth about God, about the world, and about themselves. The truth was that they suffered hardship and worried about money, not because life was hard, but because they were faithless. It was a criticism. It was a rebuke. And it was the best news they had ever heard, because they did not have to remain faithless. It meant that their suffering was not hardcoded, so to speak, into this world and this reality. They could change. Things could change. All they needed was faith in God. A faithless theology that camouflages itself in phony compassion snatches this one chance for change from the people. It dooms them to unbelief, worthless suffering, and God's disapproval. It is a most cruel and demonic religion.

We do not condemn people for being poor, but we condemn people for their unbelief, whether they are rich or poor. When we speak to the rich, we condemn their unbelief in trusting in riches. God can save the rich from their idolatry and their gnawing ennui. When we speak to the poor, we condemn their unbelief in not trusting in God, so that they may become rich. God can save them from their poverty and their suffering.

The sins of the rich and the poor are often the same. The poor who either lament about their poverty or boast about their poverty also commit idolatry, because they have made money the point of reference to everything in their lives. They even look at God and their faith from the perspective of their poverty. They allow their poverty to define themselves. They allow their suffering to define God. This is evil. There is nothing to commend them about this.

The poor can be commended if they are rich in faith while they are poor. However, the Bible teaches that if we have faith and if we put first the kingdom of God, then all the things related to money would be added to us. Jesus said that someone who has faith would not worry about food, and drink, and clothes. This is not because the person should not have these things, but it is because he would expect God to give him these things. If the poor are rich in faith, they should not need to remain poor. Most people are tested by this teaching. It exposes their unbelief and their disagreement with Jesus, even their rejection of Jesus. And they are outraged.

Jesus said that God feeds birds that do not work, and God clothes worthless flowers better than Solomon was clothed. If God would feed and cloth them, how much more would he feed and cloth us? So if the poor are so rich in faith and in spiritual things, let them become rich in material things as well. If the poor are so zealous for the kingdom of God, let all the things that money can buy be added to them also. It is strange that when you preach prosperity to poor people, the Faithless would complain that you are out of touch, or that you are insensitive. Faithless orthodoxy would demand that you comfort the poor by affirming them in their poverty, or even affirming poverty itself. This is because the Faithless do not believe in God, and therefore they have no gospel to tell the poor. They have no solution. They have no good news.

When we preach prosperity to the poor, are we insensitive? Are we making them feel guilty about their plight? And are we offering them false hope? These things are said to us, but they are accusations against Jesus Christ. Among those who listened to Jesus were the poorest of the poor, but Jesus threw the name of Solomon right at them. Jesus said that the flowers were dressed better than Solomon, and then he said that the people were above the flowers. To the Faithless, this would be insensitive. To the faithful, this would be inspiring. It would be good news. It would be gospel. It would be the very thing that awakes aspiration in people who have been dead inside due to their poverty, their suffering, and their lack of prospects. God is your prospect. God is your way out, and God is your way up. That is the gospel.

Jesus was speaking to the poorest of the poor, and he rebuked them for their lack of faith. He rebuked them for not trusting God for money and things that money can buy. A faithless gospel would tell these people that they have done nothing wrong, and there is probably nothing that they can do. In fact, it tells them that God is the one who puts them in poverty, and they would likely remain in poverty because it is the will of God. But God will comfort them in the next life. This is a selfish message. It allows the Faithless to maintain their religious authority in the eyes of the people without having the faith to take them by the hand and walk out on the water together.

This message deceives suffering people into being satisfied with their suffering and not grasping for more. Instead, they must cling to the faithless leaders to comfort them again and again. They become addicted to the gospel of suffering. It is a message that offers them a moment of comfort, even a moment of euphoria for their suffering. But it is a message that solves nothing, so that they must return to the faithless preachers and scholars to receive another dose of unbelief and false comfort, and then another dose, and then another. Meanwhile, the Faithless expect the people's adoration and financial support until these pitiful souls burn out. Before their last flicker of light disappears, the Faithless turns to indoctrinate a next generation with unbelief and false piety.

On the contrary, Jesus taught that if you do not believe for prosperity in this life, then you are walking in unbelief. He rebuked the poor and suffering for not trusting in God. To those who were willing to hear it, Jesus gave them a way out. He gave them a way out of their suffering and their degrading existence. He wanted the people to consider how Solomon lived. But God dressed something that was worthless and that did no work better than he dressed Solomon.

Then he wanted the people to regard themselves as even more suited to receive God's care. This is the message Jesus preached. This is the gospel.

If you are poor, there is nothing to be ashamed of unless you are also poor in faith. But if you are rich in faith, then let that faith bring you out of poverty. God will add to your life everything that money represents and everything that money can buy. If you have faith, then even if you begin in poverty, you should not remain in poverty. Jesus said this. This is essential to faith and the gospel. This is essential to what it means to worship God and to follow Jesus Christ. Poverty is not anything to boast about. If you boast about your poverty, then you are stupid and selfish. You ought to have faith in God to receive prosperity, so that you may stop being a burden to the world and the church, and so that you may enable your family and the gospel to make more progress. Nevertheless, do not follow the way of the pagans. They seek money first, because money is their god. But Jesus said, seek God first, and money will follow.

If it is problematic to preach prosperity to the poor, then it is far more problematic to preach righteousness to sinners. But the resistance is backward. Always preach God's solutions against the problems. When we speak to sinners, we preach about the righteous of God. Doesn't this shine a light on their shortcomings, and provoke a sense of condemnation in them? Exactly. But our message is God's solution to their sinful condition. If they hear our message and stop at feeling bad about themselves without embracing the solution we present to them, then it is right that they continue feeling condemned.

The gospel does not address only the sins of people, but it is God's answer to all our problems. All of them. And the gospel can begin to improve every aspect of humanity in this life. It will bring miraculous changes right now. Faithless religion tells the lie that we need to wait until the next life for the blessings of God to come upon us. They say this because the people are faithless, so that they are unable to receive the blessings of God. But these religious charlatans want to rule as your leaders, and they cannot allow you to receive anything from God that they cannot receive. This is why they preach a God that does not do anything for you in this life. They do not want you to know that you can have much more faith than they do, and when you realize this, you would rule over them. They are afraid to be unmasked. They are afraid of losing their influence and their admiration from people that they have deceived with their human religion and orthodoxy.

We preach prosperity to the poor, and we say that they should have faith in God to make it happen. We do not tell them, "You are perfect just the way you are. In fact, you are so poor because you are better than everyone else. God is showing special grace toward you." Instead, we repeat the gospel of Jesus, "You cannot worship both God and money. But if you will worship God alone and put him first, then he will add money to your life. He will put money under your feet. Do you remember the wealth of Solomon? God dresses the flowers better than he dressed Solomon. And to him, you are worth more than the flowers. If you do not think this way, then it is because you have no faith."

The teaching of Jesus on prosperity makes the Faithless feel deflated and indignant, because they can no longer pretend that their poverty validates them. They can no longer claim their poverty as some sort of moral victory over those who possess prosperity. It is all a scam, and Jesus exposes them. Poverty is suffering for nothing. But to those who have faith, the teaching of Jesus is a light at the end of the tunnel. As they listen and think about it, the light comes closer and closer, brighter and brighter. They are not running after money itself. Pagans do that. But the ones who have faith run after God. He is the true light. He is the true hope. He is the answer to all their problems. He is the fulfillment of all their hopes and dreams. And he is the one who will add to them all the things that the pagans run after.

In the same way, we do not condemn people for being sick, but we condemn them if they remain in unbelief and refuse to receive healing from God. Someone might say, "Perhaps I will glorify God with my sickness." That is a lie he tells himself. It is an excuse to make him feel better about himself. He does not glorify God by his sickness. People will not gather around him and praise God for how the sickness is ruining his life. No, they will praise the man for how he endures it! They will admire him for how he still has faith in God in his suffering. The Bible teaches that those who have faith in God are supposed to receive healing. He is robbing God of his glory by the sickness. Every religious teacher who claims that sickness glorifies God is spreading unbelief and rebellion. God is glorified by miracle healing. It is a demonstration of his power and mercy. It shows that he is eager to remove suffering. People praised God when Jesus healed the sick. God is glorified when he destroys senseless suffering.

There is no condemnation for the sick if our message awakens faith in them. If they persist in unbelief, then they are condemned because of their unbelief, whether they are rich or poor, and whether they are well or sick. Suffering is no excuse for unbelief. Sickness is never an excuse for a lack of faith in healing. Trust in God to work a miracle, and restore health to you. Poverty is never an excuse for a lack of faith in prosperity. Trust in God to work a miracle, and bring wealth to you. Wealth itself is not holiness, and poverty itself is surely not holiness. But the Bible says, "The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches, honor, and long life."

The Faithless oppose this. They cringe at the thought that faith and holiness should have a positive and direct correlation with wealth and health, with power and success. But this is the truth, and we must not be ashamed of it. The Faithless will criticize us for telling the good news to the sick and the poor. Let us follow the example of Jesus and be savage and abusive toward them. They refuse to enter into the place of rest that God provides, and they forbid others to enter. They are the worst of the worst of humanity. The Faithless entice humanity toward sin, suffering, and sickness. They convince people to become satisfied with the works of the devil. Multitudes reject Jesus Christ because they think this nonsense is the gospel, and they have no tolerance for religious foolishness. So they turn away from God. But this is not the gospel. Jesus Christ preached and practiced miracle healing. And Jesus preached and practiced miracle prosperity, the likes of which pagans would run after but never attain.

We defy the Faithless. Truth is on our side. Reason is on our side. Scripture is on our side. God is on our side. History is on our side. Experience is on our side. Power to work miracles is on our

side. Christians are too lenient with teachers of unbelief. The Faithless preach a false religion, a false gospel that is not gospel at all. They preach rebellion against the truth. It is not up to us to be lenient toward those who declare that God has ceased fulfilling his word. It is not up to us to be respectful toward those who claim that the Holy Spirit has ceased his evident operations, and that the works of the Spirit we witness come from the flesh or even demons. The Faithless call themselves Christians, but they blaspheme the Holy Spirit. And it is not up to us to downplay this fact.

However, we will not allow them to distract us or to capture our attention. We will devote our life to save those who will listen and believe. The Faithless are often hardened and beyond repentance. It is a waste to talk to them beyond what is necessary to offer a testimony against them, so that on the day of judgment there shall be a record of their rejection of the gospel, even though they claim to be the guardians of the gospel. There are millions who will listen to the good news, and embrace it the first time they hear it. We can save them by the message that God has entrusted to us. It is a worldly religion to reject the healing and prosperity in the gospel, because this is what the world expects of religion. The world expects religious people to remain sick and poor, to shut their mouths, and to stay out of their way. But our God is the God of All. He is God over all of life. If we will worship him alone and put him first, then all other things will be added to us.

Because He Got Caught

David was furious, and he said, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:5-7)

When someone sins, and then he is confronted and apologizes, there is often a rush to say, "He is not sincere. He is apologizing only because he got caught." People often apologize or repent after they have been caught. The timing of repentance follows the exposure of their sin. But this does not mean they are insincere. While it is possible for a person to fake remorse after being caught, it is also possible for someone to genuinely wake up after being exposed, to recognize their wrongdoing, and to sincerely repent.

An alarm clock sounds, and a person wakes up. He wakes up because his alarm clock goes off. It would not be right to say, "He is a hypocrite. He is a lazy person. He wakes up only because of the alarm." The purpose of the alarm clock is to wake him up, and it is effective. It does not mean that the person is hypocritical or lazy or that he is still asleep. In the same way, when someone is caught in their sin, the confrontation serves as a wake-up call, and the person may sincerely repent.

In fact, all of us need that wake-up call at various points in our lives. We go through life unaware of the seriousness of our actions, unaware of the damage we are causing to ourselves, others, and most importantly, unaware of the broken relationship we have with God. We are either unaware or in denial. It is when we are confronted, when we are caught, that we begin to see the truth. The exposure of our sin is like a light shining in a dark room, revealing what was hidden. And when that light shines, we can either cover our eyes and refuse to see, or we can face the truth and repent.

Yes, it is possible for a person to fake remorse when they are caught. In such cases, their repentance would be insincere and merely an act to escape consequences. But it is also possible, and indeed it is often the case, that a person truly regrets their actions after being caught. Sometimes, being exposed is the very thing that forces a person to stop, think, and understand the gravity of their sin. This kind of repentance is not wrong, but it is the natural outcome of being confronted with the truth. We cannot judge a person's repentance solely by the sequence of events that led to it.

When we preach to sinners, and they repent because they have been confronted by the truth, is this not what we expect? Is this not what we want to happen? It is not as if everyone who repents and converts to Christ does so spontaneously without any external confrontation. It is foolish to think that only those who repent without being caught are sincere. Many people repent and convert to Christ because they are confronted, either by the word of God alone or by the word of God accompanied by the consequences of their actions.

God often uses confrontation to bring about repentance. Confrontation can come in many forms: a word of rebuke from a friend, a powerful sermon, or the natural consequences of our sin. In each case, the confrontation is meant to wake us up, to bring us to our senses, and to lead us to repentance. As the Bible says, "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Confrontation, though painful, is an act of love. It is an opportunity for us to turn away from sin and turn back to God.

When Nathan confronted David about his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, David was exposed. He was caught. Nathan said, "You are the man!" David's response was one of genuine repentance, and he replied, "I have sinned against the Lord." The confrontation led David to acknowledge his sin, and his repentance was sincere. There is no evidence that David was remorseful or that he repented before Nathan confronted him. Even if there was guilt, there was no definitive repentance. He repented because he was caught and confronted by the prophet.

David's repentance was more than a superficial acknowledgement of wrongdoing. He repented from his heart. He cried out, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He experienced true repentance. He had a desire for transformation, a desire to be made new. David recognized that his sin was ultimately against God. He said, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." His repentance was rooted in an understanding of his offense against a holy God and a longing for restoration. He repented because he got caught, but there was nothing false about it.

Another example is the apostle Paul. When Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul was not on his way to repent. He was on his way to arrest Christians. And he was caught and confronted by Jesus himself. But Paul's response was genuine. He became one of the most fervent disciples, dedicating his life to preach the gospel and suffer for the truth. He later explained, "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." Jesus caught him while he was on a mission for evil and turned him around. He was apprehended by Christ, and his repentance and transformation were sincere.

Paul's transformation was radical. He went from being a persecutor of the church to being its greatest advocate. This kind of change can only come from a genuine encounter with the truth. When Paul was confronted by Jesus, he did not resist or make excuses. Instead, he asked, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" This is the heart of true repentance. It is a willingness to submit to God's will, to change direction, and to follow him wholeheartedly. Paul's life became a testament to the power of God's grace, and his repentance was evident in his actions, his preaching, and his unwavering commitment to the gospel. All of this happened because Paul was caught and confronted.

Repentance after being caught can be real and profound. David and Paul were both caught, exposed, and confronted in their wrongdoing, yet their reactions were genuine, leading to true

transformation. Their stories also remind us that being caught is not the end. It can be the beginning of a process toward redemption and restoration.

On the other hand, even what appears to be self-initiated repentance can be deceptive. A person might repent because they fail to live up to their own personal ideology or ethical standard. This kind of repentance is not the work of the Holy Spirit but of self-righteousness. Such a person might take pride in his honesty, in his sensitive conscience, and in upholding his own private ethical standard, but it has nothing to do with God. He feels that by admitting his failure, he is being honest. In reality, he is merely shifting the scales. He is taking points off on one side while adding them back on the other. He admits to one sin while being proud that he admits it.

True repentance is a response to the word of God. It is not about adhering to a private code of ethics or about maintaining personal integrity. True repentance comes when we are confronted by God in some way, through his word, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and through the preaching of the gospel. It results in faith and action, not in self-congratulation. Repentance comes when we are caught, whether by God's word alone or by God's word accompanied by an exposure of our sin.

Self-righteous repentance is a dangerous deception because it gives the appearance of godliness without the substance. It is rooted in pride, not in humility. True repentance, on the other hand, is marked by a broken and contrite heart. As the Bible says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." This does not necessarily refer to earth-shattering emotions, but to a genuine understanding and acknowledgment. When this happens, the Bible says, the heart is cleansed by the blood of Christ, removing even the consciousness of sin. The person no longer feels sinful. He knows that he is no longer a sinner, because God has made him white as snow.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are supposed to be knowledgeable about conviction and repentance. Yet even Christians make foolish statements like, "He only apologized because he got caught," as if this automatically means the person is insincere. Jesus said, "Stop judging by mere appearances, but make a right judgment." Learn to discern true repentance, not by the circumstances that led to it, but by the person's subsequent beliefs, words, and actions.

True repentance bears fruit. As John the Baptist said, "Produce fruit consistent with repentance." The evidence of true repentance is not found in the timing of the apology but in the transformation that follows. A person who truly repents will demonstrate a change in doctrine, a change in attitude, and a change in behavior. This transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live in a way that honors God.

Many people wake up because they are caught, whether by the preaching of the gospel, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, or by the miraculous signs that God uses to confront them. This is the purpose of God's confrontation. It is his mercy that catches us in our sin, that confronts and exposes us, and that wakes us up. The alarm clock rings, and we wake up. The confrontation

happens, and we repent. This is the power of God's word and the purpose of his discipline. We can also extend the same grace to others, recognizing that the confrontation of sin is often the very means by which God brings about true and lasting change.

Because You Believe It

Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? (Galatians 3:5)

The Galatians had witnessed miracles. They experienced the power of God in ways that transcended natural possibilities. Paul pointed out that these miracles occurred not because they observed the law, but because they believed the message of the gospel. It was their faith in what they heard that brought them into contact with the power of God.

Paul emphasized to them that miracles came from faith. His original contrast was with the law, because it was what diverted the Galatians from faith. However, we can apply the principle more widely, because it is not as if there are other things that can legitimately take us away from faith. Faith is the constant. What he said applies against anything else that would lead us away from faith.

Faith is essential. Faith is the way of salvation. Paul illustrated this by pointing out that faith is also the way to miracles. Faith comes from the gospel, the word of God. Paul said that faith comes from hearing the message about Jesus Christ. And then he said that when a person believes the gospel, miracles happen.

The false teaching that miracles happened only because of the apostles and prophets is a direct rejection of this principle of faith. Just as those who attacked faith with their insistence on the law were heretics, those who attack faith with any other emphasis are also heretics. Just as these heretics in the past preached a different gospel, which was no gospel at all, these other heretics also preach a different gospel. The Bible is clear that miracles do not depend on special gifts and ministries, but on faith in the gospel.

When Paul preached to the Galatians, he preached Christ crucified and risen, and the people responded with faith. It was this faith that opened the door for the Spirit of God to work in their lives. They believed what they heard, and as a result, they experienced miracles. The power of God was manifest among them because they had genuine faith in the message of the gospel. The Spirit was given, and miracles were performed, not because of who Paul was, but because the Galatians believed what they heard. Notice Paul's emphasis: it was not that they believed because of the miracles, but that the miracles happened because they believed.

The Faithless wish to attribute miracles to the apostles, to special gifts, or to special times like the first century. They think that miracles happened only because of the authority of the apostles or because God was doing something special in that period. But Paul contradicted this idea. Miracles happen because of faith, regardless of apostleship, gifts, or periods. The power of God is not restricted to a specific time or a specific group of people. It is available to anyone who believes the gospel. The same faith that worked miracles among the Galatians will work miracles today. It is not about the person; it is about the message and the faith that responds to it.

Jesus himself emphasized this over and over again. In the context of miracles, he said, "All things are possible for one who believes." And he often said, "Your faith has healed you." When people believed what they heard about Jesus, they experienced miracles. The gospel has not changed, and God has not changed. If there are no miracles, there are two possible reasons. Either we are not preaching the gospel, or we are not believing the gospel. If we do not preach this gospel that brings miracles, people will not believe a gospel that brings miracles, and if they do not believe a gospel that brings miracles, they will not experience the miracles. But the only gospel is a gospel that promises salvation and miracles to everyone who believes.

Many churches preach a different gospel. Some turn it into a message of moral improvement or political activism. Others, when they speak of miracles, refer to them only as historical events and make only symbolic applications. This is not the gospel. The gospel is the message of Christ crucified and risen, the message of reconciliation with God, and the message of his kingdom breaking into this world with miracle power. It is about the work of God throughout history, culminating in the coming of Christ, with increasing saving and healing effects in the present. If we do not preach this message, we cannot expect people to believe, and if they do not believe, we cannot expect to see the power of God at work. This is why many churches are weak, sick, and dead. They have withered from the roots, as if Jesus has cursed them, saying, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!"

Paul also emphasized that the Holy Spirit was given to the believers because of their faith, not because of their works under the law. The fact that he used this to prove his point demonstrates that receiving the Spirit is different from receiving Christ for salvation or justification. Paul's argument was that they received the Spirit by faith, not by works of the law, which proved that salvation itself was received by faith, not by keeping the law. He used the fact that they received the Spirit by faith to show that salvation comes through faith in Christ. If he had thought that receiving the Spirit was the same as receiving Christ for salvation, his argument would have been circular. If he was not making a circular argument, it must mean that receiving the Spirit is different from receiving Christ.

Consider Paul's argument again. He also stated that the Galatians received miracles because of their faith, not because of the law. It is obvious that miracles and Christ, and miracles and salvation, were different things. They were not synonymous terms, or different ways of referring to the same experience. If receiving miracles were the same as receiving Christ for salvation, if these were simply different terms for the same experience, then Paul would be arguing in a circle. He would essentially be saying, "You receive salvation by faith and not by the law, because you receive salvation by faith and not by the law." Instead, Paul argued, "You receive salvation by faith and not by the law, and this is demonstrated by the fact that you received miracles by faith and not by the law."

Paul referred to receiving the Spirit in the same way as receiving miracles, using both as evidence that salvation comes by faith and not by the law. You can receive Christ by faith without receiving a healing miracle, but you can receive a healing miracle in addition to

receiving Christ. And you can also receive the Holy Spirit as something different from and in addition to receiving Christ. This means that receiving the Spirit is distinct from receiving Christ for salvation, just as receiving miracles like healings and prophecies is different from receiving Christ for salvation. These experiences could be used as evidence of how salvation was received. Receiving salvation by faith was not used as evidence of itself, but receiving other things by faith, such as the Spirit and miracles, was used as evidence that everything from God is received by faith and not by the law.

This refutes the moronic and heretical teaching that Paul assumed we receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit when we receive Jesus Christ for salvation. In fact, he made arguments to defend justification by faith itself on the basis that receiving the Holy Spirit and receiving Jesus Christ were different things. This particular argument he offered for justification by faith depended on the common knowledge that receiving the Spirit and receive Christ were two separate experiences. Since we receive the Spirit and miracles by faith, we know that we receive salvation and justification by faith, because this is how we receive all the blessings and promises of God — by grace, through faith.

Paul's argument presents a terminal challenge: one must either condemn the passage as circular and fallacious, thus rejecting the inspiration of Scripture and renouncing the very basis of the gospel, thereby forfeiting faith in Christ and his salvation, or he must admit that receiving the Holy Spirit is a distinct and separate experience from conversion, regeneration, and receiving Jesus Christ for salvation and justification.

Just as we receive miracles by believing the gospel, we also receive this baptism of the Holy Spirit by believing the gospel, regardless of whether there are apostles or special gifts, and regardless of which century we live in. Jesus said that we would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. This is the power to preach as though we are from another world, the power to heal the sick and cast out demons, and the power to enter into other supernatural experiences like visions, dreams, tongues, and prophecies. All these things begin when we preach the true gospel, and when we believe it.

Faith: Down to the Roots

On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it....As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots. And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." (Mark 11:12-14, 20-21)

Jesus said to a tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." Then the disciples marveled that the tree withered from the roots. Jesus replied that if anyone would have faith, he could even say to a mountain, "Throw yourself into the sea," and the mountain would obey.

This episode offers insights concerning the mechanics of speaking in faith. These insights are not meant to restrict us, as if to limit how faith must operate. On the contrary, they enable us to perceive the freedom in the operation of faith, of how faith can operate, and of the great things we can do when we operate in faith. When we have faith in God, we can have confidence in life, we can have power in life, we can have power over ourselves, power over our circumstances, power over nature, and power to perform miracles.

Jesus talked about the fruit, but his words affected the roots. The tree did not only stop producing fruit forever, but the very roots of the tree died. When we speak in faith or when we pray, there might be no perceivable difference at first, but if there is faith, then the power of God is at work. We can expect that the issue is addressed at the roots. The power of faith can solve the problem down to the imperceptible part of the issue, the part that is not seen, known, or understood.

For example, when we speak to a disease and command it to cease, the disease might immediately be dead at its roots, but the symptoms or feelings associated with the disease might remain for a time. Trust in the power of God and the power of faith, not in your senses. It is not that the signs and the pains produced by the diseases have disappeared. Your senses indeed perceive them, but your senses cannot prove that faith is ineffective.

In fact, sometimes the power of God could eliminate the tangible signs of the diseases before your eyes, and then continue to attack the roots of the disease until the person is thoroughly cleansed from it. Whether the problem withers from the roots up or whether it withers down to its roots, the end result is that it is destroyed. It is solved, not merely covered up, and it can never resurface.

Jesus said no one would eat fruit from the tree again, but he did not command the tree to die. If we look at the words alone, there are other ways that they could have been fulfilled. For example, if all of humanity perished and the tree remained alive, his words would have become true. No one would have remained to eat fruit from the tree. But that was not what Jesus intended. He wanted the tree to die, and his intention was conveyed in his words. Of course, his

words had to align with his intention, or words would lose all meaning, but the words themselves did not have to specify all the details in order for them to be effective. There is freedom and power in faith.

When we speak in faith, such as to command a healing miracle to happen, one way is to speak the end result. Whatever needs to happen will happen at the very root of the matter. Your intention and your meaning will go forth with your words. And of course, God knows your thoughts and desires. He comprehends the whole situation. What if you declare, "I will never be sick again," and mean it? What if you say, "My youth is renewed like the eagle's"? If you have faith, the roots of your health shall be transformed. When ministering healing to another person, what if you have the faith to say, "This pain will never bother you again"? The healing power of God will reach to the root of the symptoms and destroy the sickness or heal that part of the body. Or, it will remove the pain right away, and although you do not know the root of the pain, God's power will continue to reach down to the root and heal the person.

You can declare, "I will never be depressed or fearful again. The joy of the Lord is my strength. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." You may feel different immediately as your spirit responds to the word of God. But even if you feel the same, we walk by faith and not by our senses. Your faith will begin to work at the roots. Persist in your faith, and your feelings will follow.

Besides declaring the desired outcome by faith, you can also command what you want to happen. Jesus said that anyone who has faith can tell a mountain to throw itself into the sea. You can say to a crippled person, "Stand up and walk!" Jesus said things like, "Your faith has healed you," and "Let it be done for you as you want," and "You may go, the demon has left your daughter." In other cases, he said things like, "Take up your mat and walk" and "Stretch out your hand" when the individuals could not do those things. Because he commanded them to do those things, then they could do those things, and they were healed. Whether he declared the outcome he wanted, or whether he commanded a certain action or result, notice the freedom of expression even within the same categories of statements. Faith is the essential factor.

We discuss the mechanics of faith not because we wish to prescribe rigid words and methods for people to imitate, but because there are people who have faith in the word of God but they do not know how to begin. They believe that they can pray, and God will answer. They know that they have faith, and all things are possible. But what should they do? What should they say? So here are some hints, but there is much freedom. Do not let the study of the mechanics of faith restrict you, but let it give you ideas about the freedom and power that you have in faith. Faith is a power that you possess from God. Faith is a right and a liberty that God gives you. It is not something that is ugly and burdensome. Faith is beautiful and empowering. You can go anywhere, do anything. You are beyond human, because you are a follower of God and believer in Jesus Christ.

This incident with Jesus and the tree is juxtaposed with his visit to the temple, where he overturned the tables of merchants and drove them out with a whip, and it becomes a profound commentary on faithless religion. The faithless religionists wished to appear as devoted worshipers of God. They portrayed themselves as serious about his commands and promises, when in reality they did not believe any of it. When God's word became a man and walked among them, preaching the same things that the Scripture said, they killed him. They claimed they adored the Book of God, but when it became a tangible reality, healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead, they nailed the Book to a piece of wood and buried it. So God condemned the entire system and declared, "No one will eat fruit from you again." Within a generation, the whole nation and its religious system was burned to the ground.

Faithless religionists are the same today, especially when they call themselves Christians. They appear religious, but they are actors, not believers. They want to look serious about the word of God. Many of them spend years pursuing academic degrees. However, they do not believe any of it. They condemn God's doctrines on faith, prayer, and miracles, and they refuse to obey him in these things. When the word of God becomes a tangible person in the form of a Christian, so that he begins to speak in faith and to expect miracles, they criticize him and persecute him. They call him ignorant and untrained, and they call him a deceiver. They wish to destroy his ministry. This is how their spiritual ancestors treated Jesus.

They are more invested in rituals than in miracles, if they believe in miracles at all. They are more zealous for their tiny crackers and juice cups than in healing the sick and delivering the captives. They are more fervent about baptism in water than the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which comes with speaking in tongues and the working of miracles. Instead of healing the sick, they are selling books on tolerating sickness. Instead of encouraging faith, they are preaching endurance and resignation. Instead of telling people to believe God to overcome circumstances, they are telling people to accept circumstances as God. They are constructing idols for people to worship. They are building a religious empire on people's suffering. They are profiting from people's pain, without demanding faith from themselves or their followers.

Let this kind of religion burn to the ground. God might even use the heathens to destroy it, as he did the old system. Keep attacking it. Keep damning it. Continue to curse it and say, "May no one eat fruit from you again!" But that is not enough. We must also teach the truth. Assert it strongly and simply. Let people know what Jesus taught, and give them a chance to believe and follow him. We will have faith that can attack the roots. We will teach faith that can move mountains. We will tell the people that Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and you will have it."

From Origin to Destiny

God is the origin of all things. As Scripture declares, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God is the author of creation, the beginning of everything, and the origin of all life. Without God, there is no starting point for the universe or for humanity. Human beings did not emerge by chance. They are not products of some impersonal force or process. We exist because God willed us into existence.

The truth about our origin shapes everything else in our lives. We are not accidents of nature, and we are not just biological entities. We are the deliberate creations of a sovereign, personal, and almighty God. He formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The value of a human life is grounded in the very image of God. As the Bible says, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." No other worldview can sustain the value and dignity of human life. Without acknowledging the true God as our creator, humanity inevitably falls into nihilism, violence, and despair.

God is the source of our existence. He is the beginning of wisdom, and the wellspring of life. Apart from him, there is no knowledge and no meaning. A person who fails to recognize this truth is left with a distorted understanding of reality. He is cut off from the true knowledge of self and lost in darkness. Since our origin is in God, our identity must be understood in relation to him.

For reprobates, this means that they are the objects of God's wrath. That is their identity. For Christians, our identity is found in Christ. We know that we are created by God and made in his image, but we must also grasp who we are in Christ. Scripture teaches that apart from Christ, we are dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God, and children of wrath. But God, in his great mercy, has made us alive together with Christ. He has given us a new identity, a new nature, and a new destiny. It is new to us, but in God's mind, we have been chosen in Christ even before the foundation of the world.

As Christians, we are a new creation in Christ. Paul said, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." In Christ, we are no longer defined by our past sins and failures. Our identity is not determined by what the world says about us, and it is not determined by our own feelings or perceptions. Our identity is defined by what God has declared about us. We are children of God. We are heirs of his promises, and partakers of his divine nature. We have been justified and sanctified. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places, far above all rule and authority. This is who we are.

The world attempts to impose various identities upon us, defining us by our race, gender, occupation, or social status. But these cannot be our main identities. They are insufficient to define us, and they are irrelevant to our status in Christ Jesus. In Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Our identity is not bound to earthly distinctions but is rooted in the eternal

truth of our union with Christ. This union transcends natural and worldly categorizations and elevates us to a place of honor and glory, according to the purpose of God.

Men have struggled with the question of purpose throughout the ages. Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Philosophers have woven convoluted theories that ended in more confusion. Scientists, though they fail even in their tiny territory but still venture beyond, have embarrassed themselves with lame opinions. Such people think that they are ultra-intellectuals, but they are stupid. However, God has revealed the answer that philosophers and scientists cannot attain by themselves, but that even ordinary men and women can understand.

The answer is that we exist to glorify God and to enjoy him, to worship God and to receive his blessings. Reprobates cannot fellowship with God, but they still exist to glorify God through their destruction under divine wrath. We witness God's glory as he punishes and tortures sinners. This will find its ultimate fulfillment in hell, which will burn forever. On the other hand, the ones who follow Jesus Christ will honor God in a much more pleasant and glorious manner. We find fulfillment as we enjoy God and honor him. We find meaning as we live according to his teachings, and as we reflect his character in all that we do. As the Bible says, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Our fellowship with God is not confined to explicitly religious contexts but encompasses every aspect of our lives.

Christians are called to learn about God, to fellowship with him, to walk by faith, and to obey his commandments. Religious frauds have made faith into a character trait that merely endures suffering with a pleasant attitude. But God teaches us that true faith is a strong and persistent confidence that overcomes suffering by supernatural power. Yes, faith can maintain a pleasant attitude in all circumstances, but it does not stop there. Faith rises up against circumstances. It attacks the forces of evil. It dominates suffering. It receives miracles of protection and prosperity. This is the kind of faith that glorifies God and enjoys fellowship with him.

Suppose a person is deep in a life of adultery and perversion. He cannot stop, and he does not want to stop. So he calls it a lifestyle of love and convinces other people to think of it that way. Now everybody sees this hardened sinner as a spiritual hero! Now he is a holy man and a pillar of orthodoxy. This is what has happened in the Christian world. Faithless religious people are deep in unbelief and defeat. In fact, they hate God and they hate faith. But they have convinced everybody that their theology and lifestyle represent true faith and piety. It is all a lie.

Part of our purpose is also to teach others about God. Jesus commanded his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Christians are called to fellowship with God and live their faith in their personal lives, but they are also called to spread the knowledge of God. We are ambassadors of Christ, entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. Our mission is to proclaim the gospel and to teach the truth of God's word. And God has given us Holy Spirit, so that we may participate in the ministry of the gospel with supernatural powers and insights.

God has not only given us an origin, an identity, and a purpose, but he has also decreed for us a glorious destiny. The world offers empty promises, and for sinners, the only guarantee is everlasting hellfire. But God has given us promises for the present and the future. Our destiny is success and glory both in this life and in the life to come.

The Bible says that we are now more than conquerors through him who loved us. Our destiny is not one of defeat or failure but of overwhelming victory. God has called us to triumph in Christ. Through him, we can overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. God has given us his word and his power, so that we may fulfill our purpose and to attain success. Our destiny is to reign with Christ and to inherit the kingdom that God has prepared for those who love him. This is a reality that we begin to experience even now as we walk in faith and obedience. And its fulfillment continues to increase and expand in every way.

Moreover, our destiny is to be transformed into the image of Christ. The goal of the Christian life is not merely to escape judgment but to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, to reflect his power and character, and to share in his glory. This process begins in this life and will reach perfection when we see him face to face. As the Bible says, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

To know one's origin, identity, purpose, and destiny is to possess a profound understanding of life as God designed it. Our origin is in God, our identity is in Christ, our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him, and our destiny is success and glory. These truths are not abstract concepts but the reality that defines our existence. We can experience these things every day. To live in the light of these truths is to live a life of purpose and power. It is to reject the lies of the world and the church, and to embrace the truth of God's word.

The believer who understands his origin, identity, purpose, and destiny is equipped to face any challenge and to fulfill the mission that God has given him. The believer can know who he is, why he is here, and where he is going. He lives for the glory of God as he receives blessings and achieves victories by the power of God. And he knows that his future is secure in the hands of the one who created him and redeemed him. This is the life that God has called us to live in Christ, and it is the only kind of life worth living.

God Has Visited His People

As Jesus approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." (Luke 7:12-13)

When Jesus came to the town of Nain, he encountered a funeral procession for a widow's only son. The widow, now deprived of her source of support, was in a state of grief and vulnerability. Moved by compassion, Jesus stepped forward and raised the young man back to life. This act of divine power astonished the crowd. The death and grief did not glorify God, but it was the miraculous reversal of suffering that led the people to glorify him, exclaiming, "God has visited his people!"

This narrative reveals the compassion of Jesus Christ. He was moved by compassion and took action. He did not address only the spiritual aspect of the widow's situation, but also the physical and financial dimensions of her plight. The result was a spiritual revival for the entire town. In the ministry of Christ, compassion, healing, miracles, and revival were intertwined. It is impossible to claim that one was essential while others were optional. And it would be absurd to claim that one aspect now continues and increases while others, if we can even separate them meaningfully, are non-essential and have ceased. If Jesus had not made such a separation, it certainly takes arrogance like that of Satan to do it for him and then preach it as gospel.

God's compassion is not a historical anomaly but an ongoing reality. The fact that God has visited his people in the person of Jesus Christ is central to the gospel, shaping our understanding of God's nature and his relationship with humanity. Jesus saw the widow's suffering, and he did something about it. This was a consistent theme throughout the ministry of Jesus. He was moved by compassion to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. God is not indifferent to the suffering of his people. He is not cold or distant. He is compassionate, and he has come near to help, not only by offering spiritual comfort when we suffer but by meeting us at the exact level of our need, delivering us from physical suffering when we face it.

The crowd praised God in response. They said, "A great prophet has arisen among us" and "God has visited his people." Their praise was connected to the deliverance that God had provided. They recognized that the miracle was an expression of God's goodness and care. God is glorified when we preach a message that highlights his compassion and his eagerness to help on the level of our needs and desires, and then pray for the people with miracles following. When we do this, we show forth his nature as a God who is merciful and kind. He is a God who visits his people.

Faithless religious people often boast that they preach a God-centered message. They frown upon sermons that apply God's promises to concrete human wants. They insist that every topic

and every text must culminate in principles about the nature of God and his redemptive plan. But this is a farce to conceal their lack of faith in God's power to invade our lives, deliver us from all our troubles, and lead us to victory for his glory.

They explicitly declare that we must not preach that God will solve all our problems. Instead, they focus on how we must be broken, how we must serve him, glorify him, and benefit him. They speak as if we are the ones saving God and not that he is the one saving us. He is not here to solve our problems, but we are here to solve his! What a pathetic and blasphemous religion! The "God" of this orthodoxy is man himself.

However, the true gospel is not about what we can do for God, but about what God has done for us. The good news is that God has come to save, to help, and to intervene in our lives at every level. God has visited his people, not to demand from them what they do not possess but to give to them all that he has. Yes, he requires our loyalty and obedience, but he also provides everything that he requires. Whatever he asks of us, he supplies. If you believe this, then that faith is the evidence that God has come to visit you. Pray to him, and believe, and he will help you. This is what brings glory to him.

This is the real God-centered gospel. God is the one who receives all the credit. He is the one who saves us. We are not the ones who save him. He is the one who blesses and heals us. He is the one who supplies everything that he demands. It reveals his goodness and compassion. It shows forth his character as a God who loves his people, who cares for them, and who intervenes in their lives. When we preach about God's compassion, his willingness to heal, deliver, and restore, we are not detracting from his glory. We are magnifying it. We are affirming who he is. God is not only holy and just; he is also compassionate and kind. God is not only the healer of the spirit; he is also the savior of the body.

What kind of help does God provide? The Faithless have restricted God's help to the forgiveness of sins and the pursuit of holiness. This is a persistent religious scam. Faithless religion emphasizes the symbolic application of the miracles recorded in the Bible. They may affirm that these miracles were historical, that they truly happened, but their applications are always symbolic. They take miracles of physical healing and provision and turn them into mere metaphors and allegories for spiritual restoration and sustenance. They take miracles over nature and reduce them to symbols of peace, generosity, or other ethical concepts. They claim to defend the inspiration of Scripture, yet in practice, they spiritualize and allegorize anything they wish to avoid. In effect, the inspiration of Scripture has become irrelevant, because they have made the Scripture of no effect by their faithless interpretation.

In the account of Jesus raising the widow's son, the compassion of Christ did not result in a mere symbolic gesture. It led to a literal, physical miracle that brought social and financial restoration to the widow. Perhaps the faithless people would be satisfied to symbolically get saved but literally burn in hell? Would that be good theology? This would be just as good as twisting the miracles of Christ into mere symbols to make spiritual lessons out of them. God's compassion reaches every aspect of human life — spiritual, physical, social, and beyond. To

diminish the miracles of Christ to mere symbols is to deny his power and love for his people. Instead of preaching the gospel, it is sidestepping the gospel.

The gospel is that God has visited his people. He has come in the person of Jesus Christ, and he has demonstrated his compassion through miracles, healings, deliverances, and through his death and resurrection. The miracles of God are indeed displays of power and revelations of his nature, but they are intended to actually bless and help each person that they happen to. They are not meant to be distorted into symbols for something else. A miracle of healing is a miracle of healing, and intended to bring wholeness and comfort to the one who receives it.

Faithless people hurl great insults at God by turning miracles into something else, often claiming that the miracle itself is "not the point." But the miracle is precisely the point. That is why a miracle of healing is recorded as a miracle of healing and not turned into a symbolic lesson right there in the text. Do you think the apostles were idiots? Do you think they did not know how to spiritualize and allegorize things? Years after the actual event, a miracle of healing remained a miracle of healing when they wrote about it.

What did it mean that Jesus fed more than five thousand people? At the very least, it meant that Jesus fed more than five thousand people. What did it mean that Jesus stopped a storm and walked on water? If nothing else, it meant that Jesus stopped a storm and walked on water. The Faithless dishonor the miracles by turning them into metaphors and allegories without first acknowledging a direct application, that by faith in Jesus, it is possible to heal the sick, multiply food, stop a storm, and walk on water. As Jesus himself said, "All things are possible to one who believes," and that by faith, we can command a mountain to throw itself into the sea.

After this, we can talk about what other lessons we can draw from the miracle. But if we do not first acknowledge the direct application, then there can be no lessons from the miracle, because we do not believe it at all.

God's Dwelling Place

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

Paul had insisted that the Corinthian Christians must distinguish themselves from unbelievers and separate from the sinful practices associated with idolatry and impurity. He contrasted the righteousness of believers with the lawlessness of those outside the faith, instructing the Corinthians to avoid any entanglements that might compromise their spiritual integrity.

Then the apostle brought this teaching to a climax by invoking the imagery of the temple. The temple was once the central place where God's presence dwelt among his people. It was the physical representation of God's holiness, and the place where he manifested his glory and power. The temple was sacred and set apart for the purpose of worship. It was utterly incompatible with idolatry, which represented the opposite of God's holiness. Paul invoked this imagery and reminded the Corinthians that they were now the temple of God. They had become God's dwelling place. As such, they must remain holy, separate from idolatry and sin.

Paul referred to several passages from the Old Testament where God promised to dwell among his people, making them his own. These covenantal promises would now apply to the followers of Jesus Christ, because those who have faith in God are the true people of God. As God's chosen people, Christians are called to live holy lives, reflecting their status as the temple of the living God. The apostle emphasized the moral implications of God's presence and the necessity of maintaining purity in their relationship with him.

The temple in Jerusalem was where God's glory dwelt in a special way. The people understood this as the physical location where God's power and presence were concentrated, and where they could approach him through sacrifices and worship. Now the temple is said to be the believer's body, and collectively, the church. God does not dwell in a building made with human hands, but he dwells within his people. He is not distant or detached. He has made his home within us.

This indwelling reflects God's intimacy with his people. He said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them." This promise of nearness echoes back to God's covenant with Israel, and even further back to the Garden of Eden, where God walked with Adam and Eve. In Christ, this presence is restored and brought to an even greater fulfillment, for now God indwells his people individually and collectively through the Holy Spirit.

The God who revealed his glory in the tabernacle and temple now resides within every believer. What was once confined to the Most Holy Place, accessible only to the high priest, is now available to all Christians through Christ. Christians carry the very presence of God wherever they go, and this reality calls for a life of holiness as a response to the living God dwelling within them.

Of course, it would be a contradiction to have God's presence without God's power. God lives in us, and this means that his power lives in us. Paul also taught that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in Christians. God's active, miracle-working power is working in and through us. This power sanctifies, strengthens, and empowers believers to live out the holiness that God commands and to perform the miracles that God promises. It is not up to us to separate the two and then pick only one of them. To affirm one aspect of this is to affirm both, and to deny one aspect of this is to deny both.

The reality that we are the temple of God means that his miraculous power should be a regular expectation in our lives. We are not only forgiven of sin, but we are filled with the power to overcome sin and to manifest the life of Christ. Miracles are part of the normal Christian life because God lives in us in the fullness of his presence and power.

Paul called believers to a life of holiness, and he also reminded us that God's presence and power are within us. As the temple of God, we have the privilege of experiencing his nearness, his covenant faithfulness, and his power at work in us. This is a reality for every believer. Thus holiness that God demands is not a burden but the natural outworking of his indwelling presence.

In the same way, the miracles and supernatural experiences that God promises also happen as a natural consequence. Paul said, "Do not quench the Spirit" and "Fan into flame the gift of God." God's power does not need to remain passive or dormant, but it is released when we have faith to pray for miracles and to put that faith into action. With God living in us, walking among us, and working through us, we are empowered to live in a way that honors him, experiencing both his sanctifying grace and his miraculous power.

Greater Than Charity

Then Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" (Acts 3:6)

Peter and John came across a crippled man at the temple gate, a man who had been lame from birth. Like the other beggars, he was expecting some money from them, a small token of charity to alleviate his immediate needs. However, what he received was far beyond what he imagined, something that would not only solve his temporary problem but also transform his entire life.

The man believed that his greatest need at that moment was financial relief. This reflects the natural tendency of humanity, to look for help in the ways they understand best. If a person is poor, he wants money. If he is sick, he turns to doctors. If uneducated, he pursues education. These are the conventional ways of the world, and they have their place. But as Christians, we must understand that God has another way, a higher way, and it is the way of the miracle.

The world is focused on natural solutions — economics, education, medicine, politics. But these are not the primary answers to the problems humanity faces. These approaches are temporary and insufficient. In contrast, God offers the supernatural, the miraculous. The way of the miracle through faith in Jesus Christ transcends the limitations of human solutions.

Peter did not just offer a handout. He gave the man a miracle in the name of Jesus. Most Christians and churches, when faced with social issues such as poverty, sickness, or inequality, default to charitable responses. They focus on social programs, education, or medical solutions, thinking that these are the best ways to show love and help people. While these things have their place, they are insufficient, even misleading, if we neglect the power of the miracle.

Consider the significant social issues of our time: abortion, healthcare for the elderly, mental illness, and so on. The world's solutions involve political debates, economic reform, and social programs. But where is the voice of the church advocating the way of the miracle? It is criminal for Christians to remain silent about the power of God when discussing these issues. Imagine if the apostles had only given money to the poor man instead of healing him. It would have been a temporary bandage on the problem, not a solution.

The way of the miracle is greater than charity. Charity can only address temporary needs, if even that, but a miracle addresses the root of the problem. The crippled man could have been given money every day for the rest of his life, but he would have remained crippled. However, when Peter healed him in the name of Jesus, his life was changed forever. He was restored, and his dignity was uplifted in a way that no charitable donation could ever accomplish. The miracle also resulted in much praise toward God, and drew attention to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Charity is not wrong. Scripture instructs us to be generous, to give to the poor, and to help those in need. But charity must never be seen as a substitute for the supernatural power of

God. Charity can relieve temporary suffering, but a miracle can remove the cause of the suffering entirely.

Peter said that he did not have silver and gold for the man, but that would change soon enough. Shortly after this miracle, the Bible says that more and more believers were added to the church, and many believers placed their money at the feet of the apostles. The church was not without resources. However, the first act we read about in this early church setting is a miracle, not a financial donation. And after they had gathered money, they did even more miracles than before. Miracles manifest the glory of God in a way that mere charity cannot.

What we see today in many churches is faithless religion. There is no power, no miracles, and often no money either. It is a disgrace. Churches should not just be another charity organization or a social program provider. If that is all we are, then we are no different from the world, because this is not the gospel that Jesus commanded us to preach. The church has failed to embrace and proclaim the power of God in the way the early disciples did, but God has never changed. He is still a miracle-working God, and his way remains the way of the miracle.

The psalmist said, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" It is remarkable that God, the creator of the universe, cares for humanity. And his care goes beyond mere regard. He restores and lifts humanity in spectacular fashion. Through miracles, God shows his deep concern for not only our spiritual well-being but also our physical, emotional, and social conditions. He does not just pity us. He restores us. This restoration is seen in the way Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, and miraculously fed thousands of people.

When God works a miracle, it glorifies him and dignifies the individual. It demonstrates that man is made in the image of God and that God is interested in restoring that image to its full glory. The healing of the crippled man was not just a physical restoration, but it was a sign that God regards humanity with deep care and is willing to intervene supernaturally to restore and uplift.

Faithless churches have abandoned the way of the miracle. They have reduced Christianity to a set of moral teachings and charitable activities. They have suppressed the fact that the gospel is a message of power. If they had ever believed in Jesus, they have betrayed and forsaken him.

We are called to embrace and proclaim the way of the miracle. This does not mean we abandon charity, but it means we must first seek and emphasize the supernatural power of God. The apostles had money, but they did not rely on it to demonstrate God's glory. They relied on the power of the Holy Spirit, and miracles followed. The crippled man's healing was a demonstration of God's kingdom breaking into the natural order, showing that God's way is greater than the world's ways.

Miracles result in sincere and exuberant worship. The crippled man was healed, and he went with Peter and John into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. We too

must worship God with energy and gladness. The Bible tells us to "make a joyful noise." And if we want the nations to worship God in the same way, we must proclaim the way of miracle to as many people as we can, to the ends of the earth. On the other hand, faithless religious people who oppose the way of the miracle conspire to suppress genuine worship.

The way of the miracle is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is the solution to the world's deepest problems. Charity can suppress the symptoms for a while, but it lasts a short time and helps very little. In fact, the disease will fester and become worse. Miracles solve the problem at its root, because it is an application of God's truth and power.

This is why we must preach the gospel. The gospel is God's power for forgiveness and rebirth, and healing, and supernatural provision. God's way is greater than charity, greater than politics and social programs, greater than anything the world can offer. The way of the miracle glorifies God, dignifies humanity, and provides true solutions to the problems of humanity.

Happiness: The Promise of God

There is a religious platitude that says, "God never promised to make us happy." It has been passed down for a long time, and it is often repeated in churches and households. Many people also say, "The will of God is your holiness, not happiness." There are variations of this, but the common theme is that holiness is more important than happiness. Indeed, if we were forced to choose between holiness and happiness, we must agree that holiness is more important. However, this way of thinking is misleading. It paints a distorted picture of God's will for us and fails to grasp the nature of holiness itself.

Holiness assumes and includes faith, and it is unholy to be faithless. Faith itself is holiness, or a core aspect of holiness, and true faith leads to miracles, healings, prophecies, and blessings. The Bible tells us that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. God delights in blessing his people. He is not a miser who holds back good things from his children. He is a generous Father who rewards those who come to him in faith. So, if holiness assumes and includes faith, and if faith brings forth the blessings and miracles of God, then holiness itself must lead to our happiness. The pursuit of holiness is not opposed to our joy, but it is the very pathway to experiencing the fullness of joy that God has promised.

The truth is that God has promised to make us happy. God promised us joy in many places throughout the Bible, and joy is nothing less than happiness. Some religious people claim that joy is different from happiness, that joy is some kind of spiritual state that can exist even when a person is not actually happy. This is absurd. It is faithless religious sophistry used to deny that God wants us to experience true happiness. Joy is happiness. There is no such thing as sad joy. Joy is not a mystical state that has no bearing on how we feel. It is, by definition, a state of happiness and delight.

Consider what Jesus said: "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." God invites us to ask of him, to come before him in faith, and to receive from him, so that our joy, or our happiness, may be made full. Imagine how ridiculous it would be for someone to say, "God answered my prayer, and I am so sad that he answered, but I am still joyful." Such a statement makes no sense because joy and happiness cannot be distinguished like that. When God answers our prayers, it brings us happiness, and this is the very nature of joy.

God not only promises us joy, but he also commands us to rejoice. Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" Even if God had not promised us joy, we would still be obligated to be happy because he has commanded us to rejoice. But the beauty of it is that God has both promised and commanded it. The failure, then, is not on God's part but on ours. Most people fail to believe and obey this basic command and promise of the gospel. Instead of changing themselves to align with God's word, they attempt to change the gospel itself, denying that God wants them to be happy. And then, not content with their own misery, they attack those who teach what Jesus said about this. I will not be discouraged by such people. It is fine if they choose to remain unhappy, but I will take hold of God's promise. My joy will be full.

Faithless religion has invented the lie that happiness is somehow unspiritual, or that to be happy would require us to compromise our holiness. This could not be further from the truth. Happiness, according to the Bible, is not necessarily tied to our circumstances but is rooted in our relationship with God. However, this does not mean that happiness is unrelated to what happens in our lives. On the contrary, many of God's blessings relate to our circumstances, and when God answers our prayers, it brings us joy.

Faithless religious people are often very unhappy for at least three reasons. First, they do not in fact believe in God, and they do not like him. It makes them miserable to pretend. Second, they do not have faith, so they cannot receive from God, and therefore they do not experience the joy that comes from the salvation and blessing of God. Third, they are wicked and disobedient, so that they refuse to obey God's command to rejoice. They would rather remove the very idea of happiness from rejoicing, so that they can rejoice and be sad! It is nonsensical and grotesque. They do not want to admit that they are faithless and unspiritual, and so they invent the idea that faith is not associated with happiness. They want to spread this lie to the world, so that everybody can be miserable with them. They are unhappy with God and want to make their misery the standard for everyone.

The Bible shows us that God approves happiness in his people. It says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." The verse does not affirm mainstream and orthodox Christianity – counterfeit Christianity – which says that God will comfort us in our misery and sustain us as we endure the hardship that he himself inflicts upon us. It is a promise that when we delight in God, when we find our joy in him, he will fulfill our desires. In other words, "Be happy with God, and you get what you want." The Bible also says, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." God's presence is not a place of sorrow and despair; it is a place of fullness of joy and eternal pleasures.

If we were in a position where we had to choose between holiness and happiness, we would choose holiness. But this is a false and senseless dichotomy. True holiness is fully compatible with happiness. In fact, holiness is the way to happiness. Holiness includes faith in Jesus, and faith in Jesus is the key to experiencing the joy that God has promised. The only time holiness and happiness seem to be in conflict is when we struggle with evil desires. For example, if someone desires to commit murder or adultery and feels unhappy because they are not allowed to fulfill these sinful desires, then holiness and happiness will be in conflict. The unhappiness is the frustration of sinful impulses. If you even desire to murder someone, you are already unholy. The solution is to repent and turn to Jesus Christ. So there remains no conflict between holiness and happiness.

When we understand holiness correctly, affirming that it entails faith for miracles and faith to obtain our desires through prayer, we see that there is no conflict between holiness and happiness. On the contrary, holiness leads to happiness. Faith is holiness, like love is holiness, and humility is holiness. And when we have faith, we can pray, and God will answer us. When God answers our prayers, it brings us joy. We can be happy in God's vindication, in his

provision, and in the prosperity that he brings into our lives. The Bible tells us, "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." God's blessings are meant to bring us joy, not sorrow. Those who claim that God never promised to make us happy have rejected God's promises because of their faithless prejudice.

When Jesus healed the sick, delivered the oppressed, and raised the dead, did these acts bring joy or sorrow to those who received them? They brought joy. They brought sorrow only to those who wanted to murder Jesus. When the blind received their sight, when the lame walked, and when the lepers were cleansed, the response was one of great happiness. As Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." Jesus wants his joy to be in us, and he wants our joy to be full. This is not the language of a God who is indifferent to our happiness. This is the language of a God who cares about our well-being and wants us to experience the fullness of his joy.

Have You Received the Holy Spirit?

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:1-2)

Christians place much emphasis on receiving Jesus Christ for salvation. When we receive Christ, we receive eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation with God. This is the starting point of our faith and our entry into the kingdom of God. John the Baptist spoke of this when he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

But John also prophesied something else, something beyond forgiveness and salvation. He said that Jesus would baptize his people with the Holy Spirit. This baptism of the Spirit is an experience that is distinct from salvation, and it is central to the gospel message that Jesus proclaimed. Jesus declared that his followers would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This is the difference between having life and having power, and the Bible makes a sharp distinction between these two experiences.

On the day of Pentecost, after Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples gathered in Jerusalem. It was there that Jesus fulfilled his promise and poured out the Holy Spirit upon them. "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." This experience happened after they already believed in Jesus, after they had witnessed his resurrection and placed their faith in him.

Receiving Jesus Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit are two different things. Receiving Christ is for salvation, to receive life. Receiving the Holy Spirit is for ministry, to receive power. This is the gospel, and it is non-negotiable.

When Paul encountered the disciples in Ephesus, he did not first ask them about their conversion or who baptized them. Instead, he assumed that they were followers of Jesus. If Paul did not think they were disciples of Jesus, he would not have said that they "believed." John the Baptist never asked people to believe in him, but Jesus did. Therefore, Paul assumed that these disciples were believers in Jesus. The nature of his follow-up question confirms that he assumed they were ready to take the next step, if they had not already: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

When they answered that they had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit, Paul asked them about their baptism. He wanted to understand how they could believe in Jesus but not know about the Holy Spirit. If Paul did not assume that they were disciples of Jesus, why did he not make this the first question he asked? Clearly, Paul believed that they were followers of Christ, but he also understood that receiving the Holy Spirit was a distinct experience, one that was essential for every believer.

The question "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" has become a point of confusion. This is because faithless theology has made nonsense out of what Paul did when he asked about it as a separate issue. There are those who claim that receiving Jesus automatically means they have received the Holy Spirit in the way that the apostles described. But this is not what Scripture teaches. Paul himself, as well as the other apostles, made a clear distinction between the two.

Some of us have tried to qualify this distinction by saying, "We understand that there is a work of the Spirit in you when you receive Christ." While it is true that the Spirit is involved in our regeneration, in making us new creations in Christ, the biblical language is much sharper. Paul did not ask the Ephesians if they had the Spirit in some sense. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit after they believed. There is a difference between the Spirit's influence in regeneration and the reception of the Holy Spirit as a baptism of power.

We have become accommodating in our approach because the apostate church is filled with people who have not received the Spirit, and yet insist they have. They have spread much confusion on the topic, and their theology has framed the language used to discuss the topic. However, this compromise has become harmful. It is time to restore the biblical language, to speak as the apostles spoke, and to draw the distinction they drew. Since the confusion is already in the people, it is acceptable to be more nuanced at times, so that we do not appear to misrepresent them or to deny the Spirit any role in regeneration, but we must not allow faithless and heretical theology to forever control how we talk about this.

Those who have received Jesus Christ are born again. They have received the life of God, and it is indeed a work of the Spirit. But they may not have received the Holy Spirit in the way the apostles described. They may not have received the baptism of power that Jesus promised. Paul asked the Ephesians this question because he knew that it is possible for someone to be a disciple of Jesus and yet not have received the Holy Spirit. The language of Scripture places this experience as something separate and distinct, something that ought to happen after salvation.

The experience of receiving the Holy Spirit is described as an infusion of power. This is not an emotional feeling or a subjective sense of spirituality. It is an impartation of divine power for ministry and for the expansion of God's kingdom. Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." The disciples were already believers, but they needed to receive power in order to fulfill the mission that Jesus had given them.

Paul asked the Ephesians if they had received the Holy Spirit because he knew that this is a critical component of the Christian life. It is the gospel. We must ask the same question: Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed in Jesus Christ? This is a question that challenges every believer to examine their own experience. Have you received the baptism of power? Have you experienced an infusion of God's Spirit? If not, then it is time to receive this promise by faith.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is essential. Jesus commanded his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high." The early church understood that they could not fulfill their mission without the power of the Holy Spirit. Even if you believe that you have the Holy Spirit, it is important to consider whether you have truly received what the Bible describes. There ought to be a demonstration of miracle power, or at least a potential of this power that is unleashed through action or when confronted with an opportunity. It could also manifest in visions and dreams, as well as prophecies and tongues.

The apostles viewed the reception of the Spirit as a distinct experience, and they continued to ask believers if they had received it. This was an essential and regular aspect of their ministry. There is solid evidence in the Bible that John the Baptist, Jesus himself, and the apostles all considered this more important than water baptism. There is, in fact, no comparison. However, in many circles, water baptism is regarded as integral to evangelism and discipleship, while this Spirit baptism is either neglected or destroyed altogether by being conflated with receiving Christ for salvation.

Christians must restore the emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This blessing deserves its own place and prominence. We should also be less accommodating in our language and expression. If the apostles made a sharp distinction between receiving Christ and receiving the Spirit, then we ought to do the same. There is no need to always acknowledge that believers have experienced the work of the Spirit in some sense. The early disciples did not do this. It is unnecessary to care about the nuance. We can confront Christians and ask, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" and then let the conversation go from there.

Healing and God's Compassion

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. (Matthew 9:35-10:1)

Jesus was moving through the cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and affliction among the people. The essence of true ministry was distilled into these elements of teaching, preaching, and healing. But what undergirded this ministry was not merely method, but motive. Jesus was moved by compassion. He saw the people and perceived them as "sheep without a shepherd." This insight will be central to our understanding of true orthodoxy, contrasted sharply with the counterfeit systems that burden rather than liberate, that enchain rather than set free.

The ministry of Jesus was comprehensive. It flowed out of his compassion for people. It was this compassion that drove him to teach, preach, and heal, addressing their spiritual and physical needs. His work of teaching, preaching, and healing were an inseparable unity. His teaching imparted knowledge and understanding, his preaching impacted the soul and called for a response, and his healing demonstrated the power of the kingdom and dispensed the tangible benefits of the gospel. A ministry that falls short in any of these respects is deficient, and one that rejects any of these is a counterfeit ministry.

Compassion was what drove Jesus into this kind of ministry. His heart was moved because the people were weary and scattered, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. The ministry of teaching provided the people with salvation and guidance in life, while the ministry of healing gave them confidence in God and relief from the most powerful and urgent threats against them. This is crucial: a ministry that does not begin with the compassion of God is not a ministry of God at all. True ministry cannot be motivated by ambition, and it must never be reduced to the enforcement of human opinions and traditions.

Why were the people like sheep without a shepherd? Were there no religious leaders in Israel at the time? Quite the contrary. The Pharisees, the scribes, and the priests were plentiful. But they were more like thugs and wolves than shepherds who cared for the sheep. They did not lead the people to life, but rather to human teachings and regulations. They added burden upon burden to the shoulders of the people, burdens invented by men that did nothing to alleviate their suffering, such as the strict observance of Sabbath rules that turned a day of rest into an oppressive obligation. Instead of ministering grace, they heaped condemnation. Instead of offering deliverance, they multiplied duties. Instead of shepherding the people, they oppressed and abused them. Effort was allowed, but faith was denounced. Pain was applauded, but healing was condemned. Churches today are just like that.

Jesus exposed the emptiness of such leadership. Although the leaders claimed to be faithful guides, they were hypocrites and oppressors. The people were worse than forsaken. They were captured and exploited. The faithless religious people would travel halfway around the world to make one disciple, only to make that person twice as much a son of hell as themselves. The Pharisees seized authority, but they offered no true guidance, no power from God to heal, and no wisdom to deliver. They claimed the mantle of spiritual leadership, but they wielded it without the Spirit of God. Their ministry, if it can even be called such, was a counterfeit ministry. It was a ministry of appearance and oppression, devoid of the compassion and power of God.

This kind of self-anointed leadership inflicts devastating damages. Faithless theology imposes burdens and leaves people spiritually impoverished, while true teaching brings freedom and transformation. Human orthodoxy makes lives harder and increases guilt, whereas true teaching offers grace and leads people into the joy of communion with God. Having been oppressed by false shepherds, the people would become vulnerable to other kinds of voices that claim to possess truth and power. They would look to mystics, scientists, politicians, and business moguls for guidance on how to approach the world, when these people are just as lost as they are. When legitimate spiritual authority fails, illegitimate claims rush in to fill the void. People are desperate for something beyond the empty formalities of the religious elite. In their desperation, they would become easy prey for those who promise to make their lives easier, while keeping them in bondage.

Jesus is the true shepherd. He brings truth and freedom. He brings healing and the power of God. He brings not another yoke, not another set of human doctrines, but faith and miracles. The compassion of Jesus drove him to meet the needs of the people in a holistic manner. His ministry of teaching and preaching addressed the people's ignorance and anxiety. He assured them that, similar to today's situation, the religious leaders were unauthorized charlatans that enforced their own human orthodoxy. He defied these leaders to their face. He gave the people permission to abandon these false leaders. That was what got him killed. But now his ministry has multiplied through those who continue to preach faith and freedom in his name.

The clash between Jesus and the faithless religious people was inevitable. They persecuted Jesus, and they persecuted his followers. Now their spiritual descendants continue to oppose us. They could not tolerate a ministry that bypassed their authority, that showed the people that God's power was not found in their religious heritages but in the promises of God, received by faith in Jesus Christ. They resented Jesus because he demonstrated that God's kingdom had come in power through faith, not through their traditions and rituals. This same scenario continues to play out today. When true orthodoxy appears, it will inevitably clash with the counterfeit systems that claim authority. True orthodoxy is dangerous because it is alive. It heals and delivers. It cannot be regulated by human authority, and it does not serve the interests of those who seek to use religion as a means of control.

Faithless religious people care more about their human doctrines, traditions, and theories than about God or the people. They are eager to sacrifice the well-being of the sheep in order to preserve their own position. Cessationists would rather have people die with cancer and other diseases than to believe that miracles of healing are promised for today. Their hearts have been captured by demonic unbelief and hatred toward the truth. They cannot stop following Satan in their hearts. They are so enamored with Satan that they cannot stop crucifying Jesus again and again. But it is not only that they cannot stop. They love it. They enjoy doing it. They relish in attacking faith and miracles, and in robbing people of hope and freedom. They are like Paul before he was converted. He was driven by a spirit of murder to persecute those who followed Jesus.

On the other hand, the orthodoxy of Jesus Christ, or the orthodoxy of faith, embodies joy, compassion, and miracle power. It is lively and overflowing with strength. It makes people holy and happy. Authentic biblical orthodoxy, of course, begins with doctrinal correctness as the necessary foundation. But this is a theology that comes from God's revelation, the word of God, and not from human history or heritage. And from this foundation comes forth tangible experiences of God's presence that transform individuals and communities, making them vibrant and full of life. It does not burden them with rituals and doctrines that God never commanded. It does not bind them to human authorities who seek to preserve their own influence. It liberates. It brings people into direct communion with God, with no mediator except Jesus himself.

True orthodoxy is born out of divine revelation and compassion. It sees the people as Jesus saw them, harassed and helpless, in need of a shepherd. It responds not by bragging about a religious heritage – how stupid and pathetic is that? – and with more rules and rituals, but with the gospel of the kingdom and the power of God to save, to heal, and to empower. And true orthodoxy delivers people from faithless orthodoxy. It tells them that God never ordained that kind of dead religion, that they are free to walk away and follow Jesus without guilt and fear.

This is the kind of ministry that Jesus inaugurated, and he intended to expand this program to more people and more places, with more power, to all periods. He told his disciples to pray for more workers, and then he made them the beginning of the answer to that prayer by sending them out to cast out demons and to heal every kind of affliction. The ministry of Jesus did not end with him. He passed it on to his followers and expected it to increase and expand. The power of Christ is already ours in his name and by his Spirit. Now the compassion of Christ must become our compassion. The mission of Christ must become our mission.

There is a pressing need for workers in God's kingdom who are willing to step forward and bring in the harvest. The need is great. The people are weary, burdened by faithless religion, oppressed by the devil, and suffering under the weight of sin and sickness. There are so many who are ready to receive the truth, and who are desperate for deliverance. However, the laborers are few, not because there are not many religious people, but because there are not many who understand and embody the ministry of Jesus. There are many Pharisees, many who would add burdens rather than lift them, many who would control rather than liberate, many

who would point to their religious heritage rather than Christ. Christians are called to expose and discredit these false shepherds, and to bring the liberating power of the gospel to those who are weary and burdened, just as Jesus did.

Healing and God's Language

If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you. See, I am the one who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And I am the one who created the soldiers who cause destruction. No weapon that is formed against you shall succeed, and you will refute every tongue that shall rise against you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me, says the Lord. (Isaiah 54:15-17)

Isaiah declared God's protective covenant with his people. It was a message of restoration addressed to Israel after a period of exile and suffering. God assured the people of his everlasting kindness and his commitment to their future prosperity. He promised to protect and vindicate his people, and to restore them to a position of security. This assurance was given to a nation that had experienced great turmoil, emphasizing that the attempts to harm them would fail.

Here we are interested in the language God used. He asserted his direct sovereignty over all things, including the very existence of the blacksmiths who made the weapons and the soldiers who caused destruction. Yet he said, "If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing." Scripture makes a distinction between God's decree and precept, often within the same context, and it also makes a distinction between the actual and absolute cause of something versus the apparent and relational cause of something. And Scripture often speaks at the apparent and relational level, because that is the realm in which we live, while the metaphysical sovereignty of God is assumed. It would have been correct for someone to say, "This attack is not from God. He is on our side. He will protect us, and he will defeat the enemy for us." It would have been the response God wanted from his people on the basis of what Isaiah said.

The application of divine sovereignty is also significant. In faithless theology, it is assumed that since God is sovereign over all things and that all things happen according to his will, this somehow turns into the idea that we cannot know the outcome of any event until it happens, even if God has promised a definite outcome, such as an answer to prayer or a miracle of healing. His sovereignty makes everything unpredictable regardless of the blessings and miracles that he explicitly promised, as if his sovereignty means that he reserves the right to break his promises. However, God himself did not apply his sovereignty this way. He said that it was because he was the creator of the blacksmiths and the soldiers that he could guarantee that no enemy could successfully attack his people.

God created Israel's enemies, and those enemies were under God's constant control. Yet, God could say that when they attacked Israel, it was not his doing. And because God was the one who created these enemies and their weapons, he could guarantee Israel's victory. This is only one of many examples showing that God himself makes a sharp distinction between the metaphysical, absolute, and direct cause, versus the practical, apparent, and relational cause. And again, the Bible often speaks only at the latter level.

Although this is simple and straightforward, many people have difficulty grasping this. One reason might be that this distinction is only true when we refer to God. He alone has metaphysical power, and at the same time, he interacts with his creatures that live on the apparent and relational level. Nevertheless, Scripture is clear about this and the subject is not complex. The fact that God is a unique case does not make the topic difficult. The truth is that people fail to grasp this because they refuse to accept it, even when it comes directly from God, and their unbelief makes them stupid.

In any case, this serves as an illustration of how we should talk about sickness and healing. God is sovereign over all things, including sickness and healing. However, Jesus repeatedly declared that sickness comes from the devil. Therefore, it is appropriate, even obligatory, for us to say that sickness is not from God, but from the devil. And the fact that God is sovereign does not mean that his promises concerning faith, healing, and miracles become uncertain. Rather, the fact that God is sovereign guarantees that he will fulfill these promises and that nothing can stop him from doing it.

The fact that God is sovereign does not mean that we must lack certainty for healing. He has already sovereignly promised it and accomplished it. We can declare, "Sickness comes from Satan. Healing comes from God." And the fact that God is sovereign means that healing is guaranteed. Thus we can affirm, "No sickness formed against me can succeed." To say, "Oh, it will happen if it is the will of God," is to treat his word like trash. It is to treat Christ, who carried our sicknesses, as a piece of dung. As Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Sickness is from Satan. Since God is the one who created both the devil and the body, he can guarantee healing. Sickness cannot win. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their healing, their vindication against sickness, comes from God.

Scripture does not instruct us to accept sickness as a lesson or a mysterious work of God; rather, it empowers us to rise against it in faith. God has given believers the authority to condemn sickness as an unlawful trespass. The believer's attitude toward sickness should be one of resistance, not acceptance. Sickness is an attack that cannot succeed against the faithful. To say, "God has made me sick," or "This sickness is the will of God," or worse, "This sickness is a gift from God," would be unbiblical and blasphemous. The correct response is to declare, "This sickness is of the devil, and it is wrong. It is not from God, and I reject it." Condemn any person who claims that sickness is the will of God or a gift from God.

Healing and God's Mercy

As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. "Lord," they answered, "we want to see." Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. (Matthew 20:29-34)

As Jesus departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. Amid this bustling scene, two blind men sat by the roadside. Upon hearing that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" They understood that a miracle of healing was a simple matter of mercy. Even a miracle that restored sight to the blind was not considered an outlandish request. It was not some carnal and covetous demand. Were they correct? Faithless religious people would disagree with them. Many of them would even claim that the blindness was a form of divine mercy. The Faithless are some of the most satanic people in the history of humanity.

The blind men were not asking for proof. They were not asking for a manifesting of spiritual gifts. The things that faithless people associate with miracles were not mentioned. They were asking for mercy. Has God's mercy ceased? If it has, then no one can even be saved and enter heaven. But if God's mercy endures forever, then we can be saved and healed now.

What happened next reminds us of the true nature of faithless religious people. The crowd that followed Jesus, a crowd presumably fascinated by his teachings and miracles, turned against the blind men. They rebuked them, telling them to be silent. It is ironic that these individuals, who physically followed Jesus, showed no understanding of the heart of the one they followed. They were eager to see what Jesus was all about, but they were not eager to see his mercy extended to those in need. For many of them, it was a religion of curiosity, not a religion of faith and mercy.

This is the exact situation today. How many people identify themselves as followers of Christ, yet are indifferent, or even hostile, when others cry out for God's mercy to work miracles of healing? There are those who crowd around Jesus out of fascination, out of curiosity, or out of self-righteousness, but they oppose his compassion. They are quick to identify as Christians, quick to attend gatherings, quick to study theology and debate those who disagree with their church traditions and creeds, and quick to voice the political implications of their religious opinions. But when someone reaches out in faith for the mercy and power of Jesus Christ, they become obstacles rather than facilitators.

When you submit to faithless people, you are the one getting cheated. If you do what they say, and if you believe what they tell you, would they heal you? No! Faithless people do not care about you, and they do not have power from God. They are not going to help you. They have

their own agenda, and they do not want you to get in the way. Then do not let them get in your way to receive your healing. The blind men could either obey the faithless people and preserve what little dignity they had, or they could lose even what little dignity they had and press on in faith to take their healing. Faith refuses to be silenced. Faith refuses to obey human doctrines, traditions, and the threats of faithless people.

The blind men defied the crowd and cried out even louder. Jesus did not ignore them. He stopped and called them, asking, "What do you want me to do for you?" He did not lecture them about the will of God. He did not tell them to submit to the circumstances. He did not suggest that the blindness might be a blessing in disguise. Instead, he asked them what they wanted. When it came to miracles of healing, Jesus emphasized the will of men. They replied, "Lord, we want to see." It would take a miracle, but they still asked for it. Then Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately, they received their sight and followed him. They asked for mercy, and they received mercy. The result was that they followed Jesus. Physical healing, not sickness, is what enhances spiritual enthusiasm and dedication.

Jesus did not heal them to prove something to the crowd. He did not perform the miracle as a spectacle or to gain popularity. He healed them because he had compassion. Compassion moved him to action. At the demand of faith, God's mercy became tangible. Divine mercy does not merely acknowledge suffering but works miracles to alleviate it.

James wrote, "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?" The mercy of God is not like the empty platitudes of faithless religious people. Unlike faithless people who call themselves Christians, Jesus did not tell the blind men, "Go, and be comforted in your blindness." He did not offer them comforting words without granting their desire. He healed them. He gave them a material, physical benefit. God saves the whole person.

Faith ignored the faithless people and cried even louder. Jesus also ignored the faithless people and responded to the cry of faith. So the faithless people took it upon themselves to call for order and to silence the blind men, but in the end both the men and Jesus ignored them. They were the ones out of touch with God. They were the ones out of order. And they were the ones ignored by God.

After they were healed, the blind men followed Jesus. Their healing led to discipleship, and we are still reading about their example today. Physical healing is not a spiritual distraction. It is in perfect harmony with spiritual growth and greatly enhances it. The miracle led to worship, and the blessing led to obedience. His mercy moves us to follow him, to glorify him, and to testify of his goodness.

Healing and God's Mission

Scripture provides many testimonies to the power of God manifested through Jesus Christ as he healed the sick and restored the broken. These accounts are not historical relics. They are living truths, revealing God's mission to redeem humanity and his desire to make the entire person whole. Healing is an act of compassion, and it is an integral part of God's mission to restore all of creation.

Consider the man healed in the Decapolis. He was possessed by a legion of demons, and he lived among the tombs, crying out day and night and cutting himself with stones. No one could bind him, not even with chains, for he would break them apart, and no one had the strength to subdue him. His condition seemed hopeless, and he was rejected by society. When Jesus arrived in the region, the man ran to him and fell at his feet, and with a word, Jesus cast out the demons, sending them into a herd of pigs that rushed down a steep bank into the sea and drowned. The man was delivered and restored to his right mind. This man, once freed from the power of demons, did not return to his old life. Instead, he became a preacher, spreading the news of what Jesus had done for him across the ten cities of the Decapolis.

Moments earlier, the man had been out of his mind, bound and tormented by dark forces, but one encounter with Jesus transformed him into a witness. He went from a symbol of brokenness to a beacon of hope, proclaiming the power of Christ. The Decapolis was a region of ten cities with a predominantly Greco-Roman culture, known for its pagan culture and resistance to Jewish influences. The fact that his testimony spread throughout the Decapolis is particularly striking.

Instead of allowing the man to join him, Jesus commanded the man to remain in the region. This is recognized as a strategic move to establish the foundation for future evangelistic work. Jesus used a miracle of healing to spearhead his outreach in the entire area. Eventually, the region was permeated by Christian influence. Healing is an essential part of God's mission to spread the gospel, even to those who seem hard to reach. Healing miracles are practical, covenantal, and missional. To be against the ministry of healing or to claim that miracles of healing have ceased is to be an enemy of the Great Commission. It is to take a definite stand against the salvation of humanity. It is one of the clearest declarations against Jesus Christ and everything he represents.

The faithless religious leaders would have dismissed the man. They would have shunned him as a dangerous outcast. Even if they had wanted to help him, they would have been unable to, because theirs was only a religion of human doctrines and traditions. They did not in fact know God, and they were faithless and powerless. But Jesus reached out to him. He not only delivered the man but also elevated him, empowering him to become a messenger. This is the grace of God. This is what God is truly like. He chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong. The man's testimony reverberated across the region, and his physical healing became a catalyst for the spiritual healing of many. When God heals, he often sets off a chain reaction, as the miracle in one life inspires faith in others.

Now consider the account of the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus. He was traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee when he entered a village and was met by ten men who had leprosy. They stood at a distance, as required by law, and cried out, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" In response, Jesus instructed them to go and show themselves to the priests.

Leprosy was not only a physical ailment but also a social stigma. Lepers were outcasts, forced to live in isolation from their communities, cut off from family, friends, and worship in the temple. Their condition symbolized uncleanness, and their isolation represented a living death. The priests were responsible for inspecting and declaring a person clean of leprosy. This was necessary for the lepers to be reintegrated into society, allowing them to return to their families and religious life. By sending them to the priests, Jesus was both honoring the existing law and facilitating their restoration into the community. It demonstrated that the healing was not just physical but also had social and religious implications, enabling the men to reclaim their place in society. This act of showing themselves to the priests was also a testimony to the religious authorities of the miraculous work of Jesus.

As they went, they were healed, and their leprosy disappeared. One of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice, and fell at the feet of Jesus to give thanks. Jesus expressed disappointment that only one came back to glorify God. The leper appreciated the miracle of healing for what it was, that the blessing was indeed physical, and also social, financial, and spiritual, leading to sincere praise toward God. The healing of other diseases, even today, also affects all areas of life, especially the spiritual aspect. This is why Satan and the Faithless fight it. Through miracles of healing, God's mission is accomplished as he restores individuals to full health and returns them to their communities, leading those who are affected to worship and thanksgiving.

Jesus remarked that the only one who returned to give thanks was a foreigner, a Samaritan. Many of those who supposedly belonged to the kingdom, the people of Israel, were full of unbelief. Even when the gospel of salvation and healing was preached to them, they exhibited an entitled attitude, responding with ingratitude and cynicism. They were like the people in most churches today, people who call themselves Christians. But this outsider, someone who did not belong to their covenant community, demonstrated surprising insight and a pleasant attitude. The reality is that salvation is often found outside of religious circles. People on the outside perceive God's grace more clearly and believe more quickly than those who are steeped in human tradition and religious pride.

In another place, a Roman centurion approached Jesus, asking him to heal his servant. Although he was a Gentile and an outsider to the covenant community, the centurion displayed extraordinary faith. He affirmed that Jesus only needed to speak the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus marveled at his faith, and said that he had not found such great faith even in Israel. Then Jesus declared that many people would come from other parts of the world to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the supposed heirs of the kingdom would be thrown out into the darkness. The church is in the same situation. Just as

those who were supposedly part of God's kingdom were full of unbelief and hostility against the gospel, many within the church today take their status for granted, showing no faith or appreciation for the gospel of healing and salvation, while those on the outside often demonstrate greater humility and belief in God's power.

Religious people often despise the idea of coming to God for physical benefits. Some speak as if it is beneath a Christian to pray for healing miracles, as if such desires are carnal and unworthy. This view represents a rejection of the gospel. When Jesus walked the earth, he healed the sick as much as he preached sermons. Faithless religious people now tell Jesus that much of what he did was carnal and unimportant, and only suited for symbolic and spiritual application! What a rebuke against Jesus Christ! What a public repudiation of the gospel! What blasphemy against the Holy Spirit!

Theologians declare that man is a unity when it comes to ethics, insisting that it matters what we do with our bodies. Some of them even make the absurd claim that the distinction between the spirit and the body is a feature of Greek philosophy and not of the Christian faith. But when it comes to healing, suddenly they are eager to assert a distinction between the spirit and the body, and say that what matters is the spirit after all. The Faithless are stupid, wicked, and hypocritical. They see Jesus as an embarrassment to their theology, and the ministry of healing is something that a rational and sophisticated believer should avoid. This attitude is what can send someone straight to hell.

In any case, Scripture teaches that there is indeed a sharp distinction between the spirit and the body. Even so, man remains a unity. The spirit has priority, but the body is also essential. In ethics, it does matter what you do with your body. Thus acts such as adultery and drunkenness are sinful, and condemned by God. And when it comes to healing, Jesus gave it the greatest attention and emphasis. He came to save and to heal the whole person.

God is concerned with the whole person. He is not indifferent to suffering, and he does not dismiss the cries of those in pain. To downplay physical healing is cruel and self-righteous. The privileged and the comfortable spiritualize suffering. Those who have never suffered say that physical healing does not matter. Then there are those who are simply religiously delusional to the point of masochism, and their sickness feeds into their religious pride. Jesus was not sick or in pain, but he had compassion on the people, because he was not a self-righteous moron. He made physical healing through miracles a main focus of his ministry, demonstrating that God's mission is to bring wholeness to every person who believes.

Consider another man who was healed by Jesus. The man had been blind from birth, and his condition had defined his entire life. Jesus made mud and applied it to his eyes. He told him to go wash it off, and the man obeyed. As he washed, his sight was restored. This miraculous healing, however, sparked controversy. The religious leaders interrogated the man, trying to discredit both him and Jesus. They could not accept that such a miracle had taken place, especially not on the Sabbath. When the man refused to renounce Jesus, they threw him out of the synagogue.

The man lost his place in the religious community, but he gained something genuine and precious. He encountered the Son of God and received not only physical sight but spiritual sight as well. Spiritual sight is the ability to perceive the truth about God, to recognize Jesus as the Christ, and to understand the things of God. While physical sight allows one to navigate the material world, spiritual sight opens a person's eyes to the reality of God's kingdom, his purpose, and his glory. The man who received the physical miracle discerned the true nature of Jesus, something the religious leaders did not grasp even though they had physical sight all along. True spiritual sight requires faith and humility, putting aside religious pride and tradition. This man was a testimony against the blindness of the faithless religious people. The miracle healing exposed and condemned them.

The religious establishment claimed to represent God, but they did not lead this man to Christ. In fact, they despised him for even suggesting that Jesus might be from God. Their religious heritage was empty and false. It could not heal, could not deliver, could not restore. It could only mislead and damn themselves and others. They had built a system that served themselves in the name of God, a system designed to oppress rather than uplift. When God himself came in the flesh, they wanted to kill him, exposing their true nature. They were not interested in God; they were interested in using God for their own gain.

This kind of self-appointed religious authority persists today. We see faithless religious people who use religion as a tool for control, who place heavy burdens on people without offering true hope or healing. They prioritize maintaining their heritage and influence over caring for those in need. Such systems are no different from those that opposed Jesus, for they too reject the heart of God's compassion and grace.

Jesus spurned human religious opinions and traditions. He brought healing directly to the people, without the mediation of a corrupt system. He showed that God is not distant or indifferent. He showed that the power of God is available to all who believe, regardless of their standing in the religious hierarchy. When the healed man was thrown out, Jesus found him again. He did not leave him abandoned. And he personally revealed himself to the man as the Christ, the Son of God.

God is on a mission to open blind eyes by the power of Jesus Christ and by miracles of healing in his name. These miracles of healing bring light to people where there is only human creeds and traditions. At the same time, the miracles keep the Faithless in their darkness, hardening the reprobates and confirming their perdition.

Healing and God's Salvation

Healing is intrinsic to the gospel of salvation, and God's eagerness to perform miracles of healing is illustrated everywhere in the ministry of Jesus Christ. We will examine several examples from Matthew 8.

First, a leper came to Jesus, kneeling before him, and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." He did not ask about the will of God, but the will of Jesus as a prophet or a minister. Even when the question was asked on this level, there is only one recorded instance in the ministry of Jesus. All the other times the people either assumed that Jesus was willing, or they did not care what he thought about it. They wanted healing and believed that they could take it from Jesus, and that was enough. God endorsed this kind of faith with an avalanche of miracles. It was lightyears ahead of the faithless and phony reverence of the religious people.

Jesus answered, "I am willing. Be clean." He never refused anyone who insisted by faith on getting a miracle of healing. He said, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out." He demonstrated this when people came to him for healing. If you come to Jesus with faith, he will not deny you. The doctrine of election does not mean that some who sincerely seek Jesus will be rejected. Rather, those who are denied are those who never truly come to him in the first place. Faith itself is a manifestation of God's sovereign grace. If you are moved to come to Christ in faith, it is because God has chosen you, and Jesus will not turn you away. The same is true for faith in God for anything. Faith is God's permission. Faith is God's grace in your heart.

Healing has always been in the Bible. The problem is not with God or with his word, but with those who refuse to believe it. The religious establishment should be condemned for refusing to promote the miracles of God with maximum effort. They spend much of their time gathering disciples for their human traditions. If they mention miracles of healing, it is to attack those who pray for the sick. They would rather tell you it is not God's will for you to receive healing than to make intercession to God for your healing. If you follow a human tradition and love a human heritage, you will miss out on what God has for you. Human traditions offer a false sense of belonging and a hollow sense of pride. It is religious delusion.

Healing has always been in God's word, and it is still there today. This "I am willing" from Jesus is his middle finger to cessationism and to the perversion of divine sovereignty. The Bible shows that Jesus repeatedly gave this middle finger to faithless religion. It is strange that people find it so easy to believe something against themselves. They find it so easy to believe that God is not willing to heal them, even though Jesus healed everyone who came to him in faith.

Satan has been using the same strategy since the beginning, and it works. In the Garden of Eden, when God said they could not have something, Satan asked, "Did God really say?" He used that question to cast doubt on God's word and to tempt humanity into sin. Today, when God says you should have something, Satan again says, "Did God really say?" He is joined by whole armies of faithless religious people, all shouting and singing, "Did God really say? Did God really say?" They will twist the promise of God into something else, claiming that they are the

ones who know the true meaning, just like Satan did to Eve. Jesus called people like them the children of the devil.

Jesus told the leper to show himself to the priest. Healing was always in God's word. The priests and scribes were supposed to minister and confirm healing, but they were not doing it. And today, most preachers and theologians are not doing it either. But healing is still in God's word. Look! It is still there, and it is for you. All you need is faith in Jesus, and you can have it.

If your heart is moved by the gospel of Jesus Christ, if faith arises within you, then God has chosen you, because faith is a gift from God. It would be a lie to say that God is not willing to save, for his willingness is revealed in the faith he gives. And if faith arises in your heart for healing, come to Jesus. You can be healed. By your faith, you know he is willing. You never need to ask if he is willing, because your faith is the evidence that he is. You might say, "Perhaps it is not God's will to give me faith for healing." But although we sometimes refer to faith for this or that for the sake of discussion, the Bible itself does not divide faith like this. Moreover, faith is never denied to those chosen for salvation. So if you use this excuse, what does that make you? The real question is the one that Jesus asked: "Are you willing to be healed? What do you want me to do for you?"

Next we encounter the centurion who came to Jesus, asking for healing for his servant. The centurion understood something that many in the religious establishment had missed. He recognized the authority of Jesus over sickness. He said, "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed." Jesus marveled at the centurion's faith and said, "Go! It will be done for you as you have believed."

What you believe is what will happen. If you do not believe in healing, you will not be bothered with it. There is no need to be upset. If you hate God so much, he will leave you alone in your sin and take his blessings to those who have faith to receive. But if you believe in the authority of Jesus over sickness, if you believe that he can heal with just a word, then go in faith. It will be done just as you have believed.

As Jesus said, many will come from all over the world to join Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the "sons of the kingdom" will be thrown out into the darkness. Those who are supposed to belong to the kingdom, those who claim orthodoxy, will find themselves outside. Why? Because they never had any faith in the first place. We are talking about faith to receive healing, but in showing what he believed about healing, the centurion also revealed what he knew about Christ. His faith was based on his understanding of the position of Jesus before God and the world, that he was under divine authority and could take command over the forces of nature. This was remarkable coming from someone who was not born as a physical member of the covenant community. Those who were born into the community took it for granted that they were part of God's people. However, it turned out that the faith of the individual was the only thing that mattered. And Jesus used this to illustrate that many who think they belong to the community of God are not even saved.

Jesus said, "According to your faith be it done to you." He did not say, "No matter what you ask, it will be done if it is the will of God, but it will not be done if it is not the will of God." The Bible says that faith is the evidence and the title deed of what you hope for. If you have faith for healing, it already belongs to you, and you can have it. But if you do not have faith for healing, then your thinking contradicts the word of God, and you need to repent and comply with the teachings of the gospel. True faith comes from God, and God denies faith only to reprobates. Faith belongs to his chosen ones. When you have faith, you do not need to worry about the sovereignty of God, because God has already exercised his sovereignty in giving you that faith. Faith is the means by which God delivers his promises in your life. It was how you received salvation, and it is how you will receive other things that God has promised you.

The final part of Matthew 8 that we will consider is the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and the many others who were brought to Jesus. Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. Jesus touched her hand, and she was healed. She immediately rose and began to serve him. The claim that we can serve God better in sickness is a lie from hell. It is also a lie that seeking healing is unspiritual, or that those who seek healing are merely seeking comfort. Such ideas are the projections of faithless people who lack compassion and who are themselves the most carnal and worldly people. They could not imagine worthy motives for seeking healing from God because they themselves are full of carnal lusts and evil ambitions.

Peter's mother-in-law could not serve Jesus while she was sick. When she was healed, she immediately rose and served him. If someone asserts that we can serve God better in sickness, or that sickness somehow makes us more spiritual, that person must be deeply rebellious, like Satan himself, to require such a perverted motivation. Such a grotesque doctrine is not only false but also reveals the twisted condition of the faithless heart.

After this, the Bible describes an explosion of healing miracles. That evening, the crowds gathered as word spread about the power of Jesus to heal and deliver. People brought their loved ones, desperate for relief, whether from physical ailments or demonic oppression. Jesus cast out the demons with his word, demonstrating his authority over the forces of darkness. He healed all who were sick, regardless of their condition or the severity of their affliction. Everyone who was brought to him received their miracle. The scene was one of compassion and power, as Jesus ministered to the masses late into the evening, tirelessly meeting their needs. His authority over both demonic and natural afflictions was evident. No case was beyond his ability, no one was beyond his eagerness to help.

Jesus healed all the people who were brought to him, whether their sicknesses were rooted in demonic or natural causes. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses." Healing comes from redemption, not from some special supernatural gift. When it comes to miracle healing, the standard is to receive by faith. Spiritual gifts represent only another way to enforce what is always available through faith in God.

The atonement makes healing available to all who believe. This is unchangeable, and it is not decided on a case-by-case basis. Jesus bore our sicknesses in his redemptive work, just as he bore our sins. Healing is not an additional benefit or an optional blessing, but it is integral to the salvation Christ purchased for us. Healing is the gospel. It is available to everyone who believes, and it covers every case and every cause of sickness. Whether your sickness is due to a natural cause or a demonic attack, the redemption that Jesus accomplished has addressed it.

Healing is salvation, just as forgiveness is salvation, and just as regeneration is salvation and justification is salvation. Healing has nothing directly to do with spiritual gifts. It has to do with the nature of God, the redemption that Jesus accomplished, and our will and faith to receive it. Although we affirm the role of spiritual gifts as an additional manifestation of grace to make healing more widespread, so that even many unbelievers could receive miracles, it is a diversion to make the topic hinge on spiritual gifts. It exposes theological incompetence, biblical ignorance, unbelief, and dishonesty. Healing is available because Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. Healing is available because we have faith that healing is available. The sovereignty of God and the operations of the Spirit simply add even more healing miracles than we would otherwise expect.

Healing and Petition

And Moses cried to the Lord, "O God, heal her, I pray!" (Numbers 12:13)

Miriam and Aaron were speaking against Moses because of the woman he had married. Their rebellion was not merely against his marriage but also against his divinely appointed leadership. In response, God judged Miriam by striking her with leprosy. It was an outward manifestation of his displeasure and of the ugliness of her self-righteousness. Leprosy was a severe affliction, and it symbolized uncleanness and separation from the covenant community. It was not a gift or reward, but a curse.

Instead of harboring resentment or rejoicing in her punishment, Moses displayed compassion and humility. He made intercession for her. This is the heart of those who represent a ministry of healing. Although faithless religious people oppose us for preaching about miracles of healing and expecting miracles of healing, when they are struck with sickness, we will pray for them.

So Moses said, "O God, heal her, I pray!" There was no elaborate argument. There was no need to make a case. He simply asked God for what he wanted. The effectiveness of prayer is not in its length or eloquence but in the sincerity and faith with which it is offered. We count on the goodness and faithfulness of God when we pray. Moses knew that only God could heal Miriam, and he relied on God's power to do so.

Petitionary prayer is a direct, earnest request made to God. It is a form of supplication that reflects our dependence on God, our faith in him, and our recognition of his power over all things. It is not an act of manipulation. It is an act of faith seeking the intervention of an almighty God who delights to show his strength and compassion. It is an expression of our confidence and a declaration of his power.

Another example comes from Abraham. Abimelech had taken Sarah, Abraham's wife, not knowing that she was married. When God revealed the truth to Abimelech in a dream, he also struck his household with barrenness as a sign of divine displeasure. Obviously, this was not a gift to Abimelech. It was not even a spiritual lesson, but a weapon used against him to defend Abraham. Then Abimelech returned Sarah, and Abraham prayed for him. And the Bible says, "God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves, so that they could have children."

Abraham's prayer for Abimelech and his household highlights the power of intercession. Just as Moses prayed for Miriam, someone who had wronged him, so that she could be healed, Abraham also prayed for Abimelech, someone who had wronged him, so that he could be healed. Again, this is the true heart of those who believe in miracles of healing and expect them to happen. It is a pure reflection of God's heart of forgiveness and compassion. Prayer for physical healing is one of the most spiritual activities anyone can perform. But those who undermine the ministry of healing stand for unbelief, jealousy, and resentment. They are some

of the most despicable people in the history of humanity. They are the worst of the worst, the scum of the earth.

Another example of petitionary prayer for healing is found in the story of Hezekiah. He had become mortally ill, and the prophet Isaiah delivered a message from God: "Set your affairs in order, because you are going to die. You will not recover from this." God had spoken, so what could Hezekiah do but to accept it as the will of God? But Hezekiah did not want to die. He turned his face to the wall and prayed. He said, "Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Perhaps he did not show much confidence, but at least he said something about it to God. He did not willingly accept the prophet's message of death.

God responded to Hezekiah immediately. He commanded Isaiah to turn around and say, "I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life." God hears our cries and honors our sincerity. He is not indifferent to the suffering of his people. He is not opposed to their desire for healing and longevity. He is a compassionate Father who brings healing and restoration. God will always honor faith, but because he is sovereign, he often answers even those who waver. As someone said, "I believe, help my unbelief." Never accept sickness. Always pray for healing.

Then Jesus brought us an even greater certainty for miracles of healing. He has authorized all his disciples to heal the sick, so that very often we do not ask for healing anymore. We operate under the authority of the Son of God, and in his name we command sicknesses to leave the people and command their bodies to recover. On top of that, Jesus has poured out his Spirit upon his people, so that those who have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit enter into a greater dimension of miraculous healing power. Sometimes miracles of healing happen as we preach, even before we pray for the people. Sometimes all we need to do is show up, and miracles of healing begin to happen.

However, there is much freedom in the expression of faith, and petitionary prayer for healing remains relevant and effective. As James said, "The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up." Jesus also made promises concerning petitionary prayer stronger than anything said previous to him: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Petitionary prayer for healing is still legitimate because it is an expression of faith and dependence on God. It is an acknowledgment that God is the one who performs miracles. While the authority to heal has been given to believers, petitioning God for healing remains a demonstration of trust in his ability and goodness. Christians are called to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, and this power can be exercised through prayer. As long as it is not used as an excuse for unbelief or to deny our authority in Christ, petitionary prayer for healing can complement other modes of operation in the ministry of healing as well as in the personal lives of believers.

Healing: Its Continuing Relevance

The advancement of medical science is often seen as one of humanity's greatest achievements. It has reduced diseases, prolonged life, and improved overall quality of living. Yet, no matter how far medical science advances, it will never render the ministry of healing less relevant. The ministry of healing through Jesus Christ will always hold a vital and unique position, beyond the capabilities of science – that is, beyond the opinions and abilities of men, since science is nothing more than people. Despite the progress of medical science, humanity will always require the miraculous power of God for true and lasting healing.

There will always be sickness in the world. The Bible makes it clear that sinners live under the power of the law of sin and death, which ensures that disease, suffering, and death persist throughout history. Science is nothing more than the concerted theories and efforts of mankind, and it cannot destroy this fundamental law. Paul wrote, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Sin's consequences affect both the souls and bodies of people, resulting in corruption and illness. Even if some diseases are conquered, the people will still be under the dominion of sin and death until they are set free by Christ.

Even if medical science overcomes one form of disease, another will arise. If a particularly formidable sickness is eradicated, some other ailment will take its place. The progress of medical science is like placing a bandage over an unhealed wound. It may relieve symptoms and stave off immediate crises, and only for those who have access to it and can afford it, but it cannot address the root cause, which is sin and its devastating effects. The law of sin and death is relentless, ensuring that no amount of human ingenuity can eliminate the reality of disease for all people, for all time.

In contrast, God's promise to humanity offers a complete solution. As the Bible says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." This confession of God's immutable nature transcends anything medical science can offer. God does not merely address one disease or another. He heals all our diseases. His healing is comprehensive because he is stronger than any disease, his power is ahead of the newest viruses, and his grace deals not only with the body but also with the spirit. His grace to forgive works harmoniously with his power to heal. This is a kind of deep cure that medical science can never hope to achieve.

In Jesus Christ, there is always more than enough healing for all who believe. Scripture tells us that Jesus "took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses." He has borne the full weight of sickness and disease for us. The work of Jesus is not merely historical but continues today through the ministry of healing. Jesus remains the source of healing for all who come to him in faith. Medical science is weak, slow, expensive, and limited, and it cannot take upon itself the sicknesses of the world and address them at the root as Jesus has done.

Paul wrote, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." This is the key to understanding the uniqueness of healing by faith in God. The law of

the Spirit of life sets us free from the effects of sin, including sickness. While medical science attempts to manage the symptoms of the law of sin and death, only Jesus Christ provides true deliverance from its power. The Spirit of life brings freedom, not just temporary relief. There is more healing in Christ than there is sickness in the world. We walk in his healing power when we have faith in him, follow him, pray to him, and align our words with his promises.

Faith plays the deciding role in receiving healing from God. As James said, "The prayer of faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will raise him up." Throughout Scripture, we see examples of people who were healed because of their faith. Faith is the means by which we access the healing power of God. Healing happens when we combine our faith in God's ability to heal and our willingness to receive. Christians can banish disease and receive healing by speaking the promises of God and exercising authority in the name of Jesus

God's promises and teachings on healing are established by his will. When God declares that he is the healer, it is an expression of his very nature. His commitment to heal is not based on our merit but on his grace and his sovereign decision to bless his people. He has already decided to heal. He has sent Jesus to carry our sicknesses, and he has nailed our sicknesses on the cross together with him. This means that healing is a reality, and it is as irrevocable as God's nature and as certain as the finished work of Jesus Christ. Unlike medical science, which is limited by human opinions and abilities, God is sovereign over all things, and his power to heal is limitless and always given to those who believe.

The ministry of healing was central to the testimony of the early church. Today, the church must continue to be a place where people can come to experience the healing power of God. The practice of laying on of hands and praying in faith are means through which the church can dispense miracles to the sick. The church is called to demonstrate God's power as a practical fulfillment of the gospel and also as a witness against sinners and faithless religious people.

The ministry of healing remains as relevant today as it was during the time of Jesus. Humanity will always need God's healing miracles, just as much as humanity will always need God's power to save and grace to forgive. Medical science – that is, the opinions and abilities of men – can never eradicate the law of sin and death. There will always be sickness in the world, and there will always be a need for the power of God to bring true healing. God forgives all our iniquities and heals all our diseases. In Christ, there is more than enough healing to meet every need. True healing, for both body and soul, comes from God alone, and it is something that science – that people – will never replace.

Healing: Mercy, Not Sacrifice

Jesus challenged misconceptions about the nature of God and the kind of devotion he desires. He said, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'" This statement, echoing the prophet Hosea, was directed at those who were entrenched in a religion of rituals and sacrifices, but they were disconnected from the heart of God. Jesus reminded the people that God's desire is not for empty displays of suffering and piety but for sincere acts of mercy.

It is still common for human religion to teach that that God is pleased by our suffering, at least when we do it with a pleasant attitude, as if enduring pain makes us more acceptable to him. This perspective is not only dangerous but blasphemous, because it distorts the character of God. He is a God of compassion who delights in showing mercy and bringing healing. The faithless perspective of human orthodoxy has allowed multitudes to die in their sickness and suffering when they could have been rescued by God.

Jesus, the perfect expression of God, came to reveal the true nature of the Father, a God who heals the sick, lifts up the broken, and removes suffering. Jesus came as a prophet of mercy, not as a preacher of stupid and useless sacrifice. God's desire is not for us to put on a show of endurance or to glorify our pain. Rather, he wants us to come to him with our desires, so that he can extend his mercy, alleviate our suffering, and make us whole. This is who God is. He desires to show mercy, and he calls us to do the same, to extend compassion and destroy suffering wherever we find it. The worst thing we can do is to lecture people who are suffering with imbecilic and condescending religious platitudes. But most Christian preachers and writers do this.

In another place, Jesus emphasized this point again: "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent." Here Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who had criticized his disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath. They had twisted God's law into a weapon of condemnation, ignoring its true meaning and purpose. They rejected the way of mercy. Instead, they invented a doctrine of sacrifice that God never demanded. In their zeal to uphold their human tradition concerning God's word, they contradicted God's word. God's desire was never for suffering but for wholeness. Discomfort is not devotion. Pain is not piety.

We see this illustrated in the account that immediately followed, where Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The religious people were incensed by this, not because they were zealous for God's honor, but because they had built an entire system of sacrifice, ritual, and tradition that had no room for the miraculous power of God. They condemned healing on the Sabbath, a day meant to represent rest and restoration, but they never healed people on any other day. The Sabbath was an excuse, a cover for their own powerlessness and lack of compassion. It is uncanny how Christians have followed this deadly pattern.

Jesus said if they had acknowledged that God wanted mercy and not sacrifice, they would not have condemned the innocent. This remarkable insight is seemingly never discussed. The

religious people condemned the innocent, and it was their faithless tradition of sacrifice and suffering that drove them to condemn the innocent. They would rather honor their historic heritage than endorse a healing miracle.

People that elevate traditions, sacraments, and holy days are prone to condemn the innocent. They are outraged, while God is not offended at all. In reality, they are offended because they hold a different religion altogether, and their false god has been offended. Now why would I care, if by following the teachings of Jesus, I happen to offend a Buddhist or a Mormon? Of course they would be offended, since our deepest commitments contradict one another. So why would I suddenly care if people of other religions, worshiping other gods, happen to call themselves Presbyterians, Baptists, Pentecostals, or something else?

If you define religion in terms of heritage and tradition, sacrifice and suffering, you will condemn the innocent. You will be cruel and unjust, while thinking that you are among the most orthodox and righteous. You will become an enemy of God. You will preach a false gospel, while condemning the true gospel as a counterfeit. You will become anti-Christ. When you witness God's mercy in manifestation through sound doctrines and healing miracles, it will kindle in you a self-righteous indignation instead of a sense of wonder and gratitude, because you have never believed in the grace of God. You will attack it as something false and unworthy.

This is the situation in the Christian world today, and it has remained this way for thousands of years, ever since Cain killed his brother. When sinners become religious without true conversion and regeneration, they become insane and grotesque. They become murderers. This is the deadly legacy of human historic orthodoxy. It is the damnable result of doctrines like cessationism, and of teachings that oppose healing, prophecy, tongues, prosperity, and success. People who hold to such a religion condemn the innocent.

They have no faith in God, and their religion makes them perverts, not converts. For this reason, they prioritize doctrines that produce no effect, and they are obsessed with things that even sinners can pretend to engage in, such as communion, baptism, and the Sabbath. But Jesus is the Lord of communion, baptism, and the Sabbath. He taught that these things ought to serve his program of mercy, to relieve suffering and to receive miracles.

What does it mean that God desires mercy, not sacrifice? It means that God takes no pleasure in our suffering. Our foolish and unnecessary suffering does not serve him or honor him. It means that suffering is not a gift from God. It means that suffering has no spiritual value. It means that faithless preachers and theologians have been lying to you! God is not glorified when we endure sickness, believing that by doing so we are submitting to God's will, that our pain somehow makes us more spiritual. God is glorified when we receive his mercy, when we are healed by his miracles, and when we become vessels of his mercy to others. The false piety that holds up suffering as a virtue is not from God, but satanic propaganda intended to keep people bound in affliction.

The Faithless embrace a religion of sacrifice and suffering. This is a false religion that offers to God what he never commanded, just as when God said he never asked his people to sacrifice their children by burning their sons and daughters in the fire, as the religion of Molech required. However, this Molech kind of religion is what historic human orthodoxy teaches. It denounces the gospel of Jesus Christ as something false, carnal, and deceptive, mocking it as a gospel of health and wealth. It condemns the innocent. The followers of this form of paganism think that true religion consists of sacrifice instead of mercy, suffering instead of blessing, cessation of miracles instead of expansion of miracles. This historic, orthodox, mainstream Christianity is pagan worship, and it is the enemy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The idea that pain is piety, or that something like cancer can be a gift from God, is nothing other than paganism. Those who teach this kind of religion are not pious leaders or spiritual heroes. No! They are the double agents of Satan, hiding in plain sight among us. They teach this distorted view of God to make Christians weak and defeated. They want Christians to continue in their suffering. Behind that pastor's pulpit or scholar's desk is not Christ, but Molech.

Faithless religious people consider themselves spiritual because they endure sickness and suffering with patience, as though God is more pleased with them for it. Molech is very pleased. But Jesus is the one who showed that, when you have faith, you get healed. When you have faith, your prayers are answered, and all the things that the pagans seek, even all the things that mammon represents, are added to you. When you have faith, you rise from obscurity and hopelessness to become effective and successful. Jesus insisted that God desires mercy, not sacrifice. And Jesus showed mercy by healing the sick, by forgiving sinners, and by raising the dead. He did not ask people to continue in their suffering to glorify God. Instead, he removed their suffering as an act of divine mercy, and that glorified God.

How to Make Yourself Strong

Scripture

The word of God is food for our spirits. The foundation of Christian strength is the Bible. Scripture declares that "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Feeding on the Bible builds power into our spirits, enabling us to overcome every obstacle and fulfill God's purpose for our lives. The more we feed on the word of God, the more we grow in spiritual power and authority.

Knowledge of the Bible gives us power, and this power is what distinguishes victorious believers from those who are defeated by the circumstances of life. The word of God is "living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword." It reshapes our inner being and transforms us into vessels of divine power. When we think on Scripture day and night, we build up strength and knowledge that fortify us from within. We renew our minds and align our thoughts with God's thoughts.

Feeding on Scripture builds resilience. Just as our physical bodies require food to maintain strength, our spirits require the word of God to be strong. Believers are spiritually malnourished because they do not feed on Scripture, and as a result, they lack the power to stand firm in the face of trials. Scripture is the primary means through which God builds up his people, giving them the capacity to resist temptation, overcome adversity, and to conquer new territories. It transforms them from weak and ineffective individuals into powerful vessels who carry and manifest the presence of God.

Knowledge of Scripture equips us for spiritual conflict. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he responded with, "It is written." Jesus wielded the Bible as a weapon. He demonstrated that a skillful application of Scripture gives us the power to resist and defeat the enemy. The enemy thrives on ignorance, but when we are filled with the knowledge of the word of God, we become untouchable. The word of God is a sword, and those who are skillful in wielding it are able to cut down every argument and deception that the enemy brings.

The word of God is the source of faith. The Bible says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is the foundation of all spiritual power, and without the word of God, there can be no faith. As we feed on Scripture, our faith grows stronger, and with such faith comes the power to move mountains. The word of God builds confidence, not in ourselves, but in God's promises and his ability to fulfill them. This confidence is what enables us to act boldly, to pray with authority, and to live in victory. Scripture infuses us with confidence and equips us for every good work.

Confession

The confession of faith is one of the most effective ways to make ourselves strong in spirit. By confession, I do not mean the confession of sin. And by the confession of faith, I do not refer to

a creed of doctrines. A confession of faith is a declaration of our confidence in God, and an affirmation of the word of God. Confession is not some strange or extreme practice. It is a form of prayer, specifically, it is confident prayer. It is illustrated in many places in the Bible. It is so common that people are unaware that they are reading examples of confession.

Most people do not get stronger when they pray. They sink deeper into a mentality of defeat and depression. When they pray, they affirm their weaknesses and troubles. Perhaps they consider this humble and honest, but it is faithless and self-centered. When they pray this way, they reinforce their doubts and fears. They think they are submitting to the will of God, but the truth is that God is shoved aside and ignored. This is because when they pray this way, they disregard his promises and the resources that he has given to believers.

When we confess and affirm the word of God, we refuse to allow circumstances to dictate our reality. We declare what God says, regardless of what we see or feel. Faith believes and speaks according to God's truth rather than the appearances of the world. Thus we declare, "My God shall meet all my needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." And we affirm in the face of sickness, "Jesus took my infirmities and carried my sicknesses. Therefore, I reject this sickness, and I receive healing by faith."

Psalm 91 is an excellent example of this kind of prayer, where the psalmist declares God's protection, deliverance, and guarantee of long life: "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" He declares that God will save from deadly pestilence, that no harm will overtake, and that angels will guard in all ways. These are confessions of faith in God's protection, guaranteed by his sovereignty over all things. By continually speaking these promises, he honors God and proclaims an unshakable confidence in him. Thus confession is also a form of praise and thanksgiving. It is categorically superior to the whiny complaining prayers that most people justify as their honest expressions toward God. Prayers of doubt are sinful. They must be condemned, not encouraged.

Psalm 91 illustrates how confession brings assurance, peace, and strength, as each statement affirms God's power and presence. Confessing these truths internalize them in believers, enabling them to overcome fear and uncertainty. By declaring these truths, the psalmist builds a stronghold of faith that reinforces confidence in God's power and faithfulness. When prayer becomes a confident celebration of what God has done for us and what he will do for us, it counters doubts and fears, and it strengthens the inner man, building resilience and fortitude.

Faith confession is also a declaration of authority. As Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." The power of confession is the power to command and change circumstances. Jesus referred to a physical mountain, but a mountain can represent lesser things such as obstacles and seemingly impossible situations. Jesus told us to speak to things. This is not strange, but most Christians feel awkward about this. They have an unbiblical worldview, and it makes them feel foolish to do what Jesus taught.

But Jesus himself spoke to trees, diseases, demons, storms, and they obeyed him. This is the Christian worldview, and this is reality. A worldview that rejects this is the delusional one.

Faith confession is crucial for overcoming the lies of the enemy. Satan's weapon is deception, and he tries to use circumstances to create doubt and fear in our hearts. By confessing the word of God, we counteract these lies and establish God's truth as the reality in our lives. This is why it is essential to confess what God says rather than what circumstances dictate. Circumstances are temporary, but the word of God is forever. When we confess his word, when we confess the reality of what Jesus Christ has done, and when we confess the reality of who we are, what we have, and what we can do in Christ, we are declaring that his truth is greater than any temporary situation we face. So we speak this way not only when we pray, but in everyday situations we naturally say, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I can lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world."

Reason

Faith and reason are not only compatible, but they are two sides of the same coin. The Word is called Reason, Wisdom, or Logic. Faith emphasizes the kind of content that we believe. It has no implication that we believe something false or irrational. In fact, since the Word is Reason, and God is Truth, faith is reason itself. Anything other than faith is against reason, and any exercise of reason is concurrent with faith.

Faith is rational. It is a spiritual and intellectual identification with the Word or Reason. Thus it is rational to believe in the atonement, in the resurrection of Jesus, in miracles of healing, in speaking in tongues, and so on. It would be irrational and outright stupid to not believe these things.

It is rational to believe the teachings and promises of God. This rational faith produces strength and resilience. Doubts and fears are irrational. They are not logical deductions from revelation and reality. And this means that they can be overcome by logical deductions from revelation and reality. If we reason on the basis of God's word, we can conquer doubts, fears, and temptations without exerting much willpower and emotional energy.

Reason is a spiritual asset. By reasoning with ourselves, coaching ourselves, and preaching to ourselves using the truths of Scripture, the challenges we face lose their power. Reason makes knowledge effective. This is why reason can make us spiritually strong. Reason is a practical tool for maintaining peace and confidence. When David faced Goliath, he reasoned that God, who had delivered him from the lion and the bear, would also deliver him from Goliath. This logical reflection on God's faithfulness made him confident without needing to work up emotional courage.

Fear, worry, and unbelief are irrational. They trigger feelings of cynicism and doom without sound argument or evidence. Reason exposes their emptiness. Reason leverages the truth of God's word and applies our faith effectively and with little effort. Reason conserves spiritual

and emotional energy by providing a clear, logical basis for disagreeing with doubts and fears. Instead of struggling against them by sheer willpower, reasoning from God's Word allows us to address them with calm calculation. This efficiency enables consistent victory.

Scripture commands us to develop our reason and understanding. Paul instructed Christians to be transformed by renewing their minds. This transformation increases our immunity to the pressures and ideologies of the world. And he said, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God." Paul described our confrontation with non-Christian ideas as warfare. Reason is a weapon by which we tear down falsehoods that oppose God's truth. By reason, we confront faithless theology, refute objections against the gospel, and we attack and destroy, totally degrade and humiliate, all non-Christian worldviews and religions.

Reason makes us strong. Reason reminds us of God's faithfulness, his past deliverances, and the logical certainty of his continued provision and care. Reason enables us to have faith for miracles without effort. Temptations lose their power when subjected to reasoned analysis. We will see them as empty promises that cannot compare to the eternal reward in Christ.

One who is fortified by faith-reason stands firm when others fall away. He remains calm in the midst of chaos, and trusts in God when the world seems to be collapsing. Christians have seen reason as a threat because they have been following the assumptions of unbelief and contrary worldviews. They try to believe like Christians but think like non-Christians, so that to keep believing like Christians, they have to stop thinking altogether. This is self-defeating. If you think like a Christian, then you will believe like a Christian, and there will be no struggle.

Praise

Praise God because he is worthy of the highest recognition. We ought to praise him even if no benefit results from it. Nevertheless, when we praise God in faith and sincerity, we stir up our joy, and we grow strong in spirit. And when we praise God, his presence and power come on the scene, bringing blessings and miracles. Praise is a deliberate act of glorifying God, declaring his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his other attributes, and his acts of grace and power.

Religious people are usually faithless and ignorant, and so they consider it strange, even heretical, when we talk about faith confession as a form of prayer. However, confession is done in the same spirit of praise. If confession is strange to them, then they ought to have the same attitude toward praise. Indeed, faithless religious people sing hymns of unbelief, defeat, and guilt. They sing about their sinfulness instead of how Jesus has made believers the righteousness of God. They sing about their failures instead of how Jesus Christ has made believers more than conquerors. Their hymns sing about themselves and the power of sin.

If you can praise God, you can also confess your faith in God, and your victory and righteousness in Christ Jesus. And if you can confess these things, then you can praise God excellently. When we praise God, we direct the focus away from ourselves, our problems, and

our perspectives, and instead fix our minds on God's unlimited greatness and possibilities. The Bible says that God inhabits the praises of his people, as if our praises provide a throne for his presence to manifest, which empowers us and brings his intervention. When we praise God, we invite the supernatural into our natural circumstances.

Praise releases supernatural joy, and the joy of the Lord is our strength. It awakens your spirit to the reality of your salvation. When you are unhappy, praise God by faith, and you can become happy. When you are weak, praise God by faith, and you can become strong. Praise him, give thanks, confess his power and goodness, and confess your faith in him and who you are in him. Praise cultivates an inner strength that will not bend. It will produce an inner environment that makes a person immune to the climate around him.

Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned, but at midnight they praised God. As they were praising him, God sent an earthquake that opened the prison doors and broke their chains. Of course, something like this can easily happen today. God can still send earthquakes and break chains. But what we often have the opportunity to witness is that when God's people gather to praise him with faith, he releases his power to heal the sick and cast out demons. People's bodies are restored even without prayer, and evil spirits are compelled to depart.

Praise God at all times. Praise God all day long. Praise God in your songs. Praise him with your words. Praise him in your thoughts. But when you praise God, stop bragging about how weak and sinful you are. Stop praising your troubles and diseases. Stop trying to impress everybody with your self-deprecation. You are not being humble when you do that. You are mocking God, but he is not fooled by you. Praise God for his power and wisdom. Praise God for his forgiveness and healing. Praise God for making you righteous in Christ Jesus. Praise God for giving you the victory.

Tongues

Speaking in tongues can make a Christian strong. When a person receives Jesus Christ by faith, he receives forgiveness and justification. He receives new life in Christ. But after this, he can also receive the Holy Spirit by faith. This is a distinct blessing and experience. When a Christian receives the Holy Spirit, he receives power for ministry, power to be a witness for Jesus Christ. Since he is infused with this power, so that it becomes an inseparable part of him, this power also benefits him in his personal life.

He takes on some of the abilities and characteristics of God himself. He becomes more confident, intelligent, and powerful. Some people might be surprised by this statement. They have become so spiritually dull that the blessings of the gospel sound wrong to them. So how can we explain what we mean? The people's minds are so darkened with death and unbelief that it is easier to illustrate spiritual truths to them with the things of Satan, because their doctrines and thoughts are more compatible with the devil. So consider this: someone who is filled with an evil spirit takes on the abilities and characteristics of the evil spirit. It is as simple as that, and this is amply illustrated in Scripture.

Therefore, someone who is filled with the Spirit of God also takes on some of the abilities and characteristics of God. He has the power to heal the sick and cast out demons. He is more prone to receive prophetic visions and dreams. He can prophesy and speak in tongues. He is more indignant against unbelief and unrighteousness. He is more incisive in teaching and defending the gospel. He is more intelligent and accurate in his expositions, and he is more bold to proclaim the words of God.

In any case, our focus is on speaking in tongues. Paul wrote, "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself." He strengthens himself and builds up himself. He makes himself strong. Paul also said to the Corinthians, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." You should not only speak in tongues, but you should do as much of it as possible. The moment you think that you have done enough of it is when you should do more of it, and then it is still not enough.

Speaking in tongues is a supernatural way to build up the inner man, bypassing the limitations of human articulation, and transcending what human effort and comprehension can achieve. Speaking in tongues feels more natural to a person than his native language, and he can do it when he is happy or sad, when he is energetic or tired, when he is in comfort or in pain. And if he is sad, tired, or in pain, the Holy Spirit can lift him out of those situations. Speaking in tongues enables a person to pray even when he does not know what to say, or when he feels inadequate to verbalize his thoughts and feelings. It is a supernatural ability that allows a person to pray from his own spirit, speaking to God from the deepest part of his being.

I Will Live and Not Die

Psalm 118 is a hymn of thanksgiving, a celebration of God's faithfulness and deliverance. The psalm was traditionally sung during the great feasts of Israel, and its words echo with a sense of gratitude and triumph. It begins with a call to give thanks to the Lord, for "his love endures forever." It recounts God's saving acts, emphasizing how he rescued his people from their enemies and brought them to a place of victory.

As the psalmist reflected on God's faithfulness, he arrived at a point where he said, "I will not die, but I will live, and declare the works of the Lord." He did not say, "I will live, if it is his will." He was not uncertain, and he did not grovel. He did not hope to God that he would live an extra day or two. He spoke with certainty. He was sure that he would live and not die. He was sure that God would rescue him and protect him. And he was sure that he would come out on the other side, so to speak, telling everybody about the mighty works of God. It was an active, assertive confession of his faith.

There are hundreds of confessions of faith in the Bible, where the people of God prayed with confidence, either declaring their desired outcomes as certain or as their present reality. Abraham called himself the father of many nations when he had no children with Sarah. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed. Elijah declared the end of a drought before he saw a single cloud in the sky. This is the language of faith, a faith that dares to declare what we have decided and what God has promised, even in the face of contrary circumstances.

This kind of prayer is considered heretical in faithless religious circles. It is because the Faithless are out of touch with God, and many of them have never believed in Jesus Christ. As they read Scripture, these hundreds of examples of confident prayers and declarations are filtered out of their minds. They have no faith, and they do not recognize faith when they see it. When they see it, they condemn it.

As Paul said, "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains, because only through Christ is it taken away. Even to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." They do not see what is written in Scripture in plain words, because a veil covers their hearts. Only through Christ is it taken away, but faithless religious people have nothing to do with Christ.

They condemn confident prayers. When a Christian says, "I will not die, but I will live," they become indignant, as if faith is an intrusion upon God's domain. They insist that such confidence is inappropriate, that true piety requires uncertainty before God, so that we must add qualifiers like "if it is his will" to everything, even in defiance to his word. They imagine that God is honored by their timidity and uncertainty, but it is their faithlessness that dishonors him. The psalmist did not say, "If it is his will, then I will live, and if it is his will, then I will declare the works of the Lord." No, he spoke with certainty: "I will not die, I will live, I will declare the works of the Lord." This is the way to pray. This is the way to praise. This is the way to live.

The Faithless have made a slogan out of living "before the face of God." But what do they say before the face of God? They speak unbelief. They speak fear. They speak depression. They speak weakness, sickness, poverty, and tragedy. They live before the face of God only to spit in his face! They glorify their suffering, and they call it piety. They have no faith, no understanding, and no vision. They boast that they live before the face of God, but they drown in defeat and failure. They sin before the face of God by despising his promises and rejecting his word. They are a disgrace, and their faithless piety is an affront to the God they claim to serve.

Scripture shows us a different way, and the psalmist is only one of many examples. He shows us that to live before the face of God is to live with certainty, to live with the confidence that God is for us, that he has a purpose for our lives, and that he will fulfill his promises. The psalmist declared that he would live and not die, not because he could determine his own destiny, but because he knew that through faith God had destined his success, so that he would declare the works of God. He understood that his life was in God's hands, and it was for this reason that he would be healed, rescued, and protected, and he would survive and succeed in the face of war and pursuit by his enemies. God's sovereignty did not make his fate uncertain, but guaranteed his victory.

We have received the full revelation of Scripture and of Jesus Christ, so that we have an even more complete basis to possess certainty. The Faithless will continue to complain. They will continue to insist that true faith ought to be weak, that true piety wallows in uncertainty, that we must always be ready to accept defeat and despair. But they are faithless fools. True faith is strong. True faith is confident. True faith declares, "I will not die, but I will live, and declare the works of the Lord." When we live in this way, we honor God. We show the world that our God is a God of power, a God who keeps his promises, a God who gives life and purpose to his people.

In This World, We Will Have Victory

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But have courage, for I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Words of victory from Jesus turn into words of defeat and suffering in the hands of faithless preachers. They recite the words but refuse to acknowledge what the words say. They pounce on the part that says, "In the world you will have tribulation," and downplay the rest of what Jesus said. This selective reading is not only theologically immature, but it also betrays the kind of wicked mindset that undermines anything positive in Scripture.

Which part should we focus on: the tribulation or the overcoming? The answer is obvious from the perspective of language alone. Suppose I say, "For my morning appointment, I left home late, but I arrived early." What would be the point of this statement? Would it make sense for someone to focus on the fact that I left home late, as if the lateness were the defining reality? If he does that, it would be as if he is looking for the negative aspect of the situation to undermine me. He deliberately misses the point of the statement, which is to announce the outcome that I arrived early. In fact, the main purpose of the statement would remain intact even if we were to say, "For my morning appointment, I arrived early." But the point would be absent if I were to say, "For my morning appointment, I left home late." The lateness is an optional detail to what I wish to communicate.

Consider another example. Suppose I say, "In my business, I lost a thousand dollars, but then I gained three trillion dollars." The main thrust of the statement would remain intact if we were to shorten it as, "In my business, I gained three trillion dollars." The negligible loss has been long forgotten, overwhelmed by the astronomical profits. What kind of mindset would focus on the thousand dollars I lost and ignore the massive gain that followed? Something is profoundly broken and disabled in a person who cannot grasp the significance of such an outcome. Yet, this is how faithless people read the words of Scripture.

Jesus did not emphasize the tribulation, but the triumph. The mention of tribulation was only to provide context for the triumph. The statement would substantially mean the same thing if he had said, "In this world, you will have victory," or "Have courage, for I have overcome the world." He even said to "have courage," making it impossible to misinterpret his statement or to mistake his intended emphasis.

Again, suppose you wish to buy a house and I say to you, "This house costs a million dollars, but be confident, because I have deposited fifty billion dollars into your bank account." Would you say, "That is an expensive house!" or would you say, "Forget the house, I have fifty billion dollars!"? The cost of the house has become negligible. Yet when it comes to religious matters, people become stupid and cannot grasp simple language. What Jesus said ought to shape the whole perspective of the believer into a mindset of victory, but faithless people choose to dwell on the tribulation, the suffering, the persecution, as if they are determined to turn Scripture against themselves.

Jesus intended to establish peace in his disciples. He said, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace." He told them how they were supposed to feel about what he said. He was not preparing them for a life of defeat. The statement is not about suffering, but about winning.

There are many passages in Scripture that declare both a problem and a solution. Faithless people will emphasize the problem and downplay the solution, and at times a preacher might not even address the part about the solution. For example, when a character in the Bible cries out in resentment against God, many preachers would declare that this is also how we ought to pray, supposedly in honesty about our feelings and frustrations, although in the same context the Bible proceeds to say that God rebukes the insolent person, who then repents in shame. Or, a character in the Bible might express doubt and fear, and preachers would seize on this and teach that such feelings are normal to the human experience, and that God empathizes, although in the same context the Bible proceeds to say that this character changes his attitude and gains an immovable confidence, declaring his certainty in God's rescue and protection. This kind of faithless distortion of Scripture is almost universal, and it is perverse. It is a reprobate hermeneutic.

On the other hand, those who walk in faith believe that even when others suffer, it does not mean that they have to suffer. As the Bible says in Psalm 91, "A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you." The ones who have faith read this and see the promise of protection in the midst of widespread disaster. They believe that even if others suffer and perish, they will be protected, because God has promised his protection to those who trust in him.

It is true that Christians could face trouble in this world, but the Bible also says that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." This does not mean that we will only feel like we overcome, but that we will actually overcome. Faith sees beyond the suffering to the overcoming, just as Jesus did. Faithful religion declares that even when there are problems, God will deliver us. Even if others suffer and fall, God will sustain and rescue his own.

Faithless religion says, "In this world, we will suffer, and we must accept it as the will of God. But God will help us endure it, and things will be better for us after this life." But Jesus teaches us to say, "In this world, we will have victory over tribulation. We are full of peace and courage, because our Lord Jesus has overcome the world." The Christian life is not a life of suffering, but a life of winning, from faith to faith, and from glory to glory.

Job: A Revelation of Health and Wealth

Job is one of the most misrepresented figures in the Bible. The Faithless have turned his life into a meditation on unexplained hardship, the human condition, and the mystery of divine providence. They have made his life into an emblem of suffering, a testimony that sickness, tragedy, and poverty are natural parts of life.

This narrative of perpetual defeat is false. As James wrote, "Behold, we count as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome that the Lord brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy." He did not exhort us to meditate on Job's pain and suffering, as if these were the final word. Instead, he instructed us to consider the steadfastness of Job and what God did for him at the end.

We are to learn from Job's steadfast character, but it is even more important for us to see that God finally brought about healing and prosperity for Job. He is not an example of suffering. He is an example of faith that leads to restoration and blessing. The conclusion of his story shows us that God restored Job. God healed his body and blessed his latter days more than the beginning, doubling his wealth and giving him new sons and daughters, children who were celebrated for their beauty and who received an inheritance among their brothers.

Job's life ended in health, wealth, and long life, for he lived another 140 years and saw his descendants to the fourth generation. He died an old man, full of days. This was not a tale of God glorifying suffering. He destroyed the suffering and then more than made up for it. It was a testimony to God's eagerness to restore, to effect physical healing, and to prosper beyond measure. James said that this came from God's compassion and mercy. Thus God's compassion and mercy do not only uphold us with patience in the midst of suffering, as faithless theologians teach us, but his compassion and mercy translate to healing and prosperity, into physical health and physical wealth. James specifically told his Christian readers to think about this.

The Faithless have emphasized the suffering without acknowledging the glorious outcome. They embraced mystery but rejected revelation. They have contributed to the universal misunderstanding of the nature of Job's restoration. Worse, they have distorted the nature of God's compassion into something that provides only spiritual and psychological comfort, when God's compassion would produce overflowing blessings in all areas of life. Just as Job and his friends have spoken false things about God, the Faithless have slandered God. They have taken it upon themselves to lecture God's people, and they have ended up teaching them to blaspheme.

While teaching this narrative, faithless religious people have done the very thing for which God rebuked Job and his friends. They have led people to revere the suffering itself rather than recognize the God who brings comfort, healing, and abundance. Faithless preachers and theologians have said over and over again that it is heretical to claim that health and wealth are rewards of faith. But the Bible explicitly and repeatedly teaches this. As Proverbs 22:4 say, "The

reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life." And that was what happened to Job.

There is no evidence that Job had a covenant with God, let alone a super covenant like what Abraham had. Job depended on God's sovereignty and gracious nature. This provides a striking contrast to later relationships that were secured by covenants, such as those with Abraham and Moses, where specific promises of protection and blessing were made.

Job enjoyed no such guarantee, yet God sovereignly chose to bless him. He placed a hedge of protection around Job, and even after Satan was allowed to afflict him, God took the opportunity to reveal his gracious nature. After Job endured, God restored him, doubled his riches, healed his body, and blessed him with long life, still without evidence of a covenant.

The absence of a covenant did not prevent God from demonstrating his love and compassion toward Job, showing that his sovereign mercy extends beyond contractual obligations. What does this tell us about God? It tells us that even without binding himself with a contract, God would still decide to show mercy and blessing to those who trust in him. God is sovereign, and sovereignly good. He never needed a contract before he could bless anybody, but a contract is itself a sovereign blessing that intends to anchor us in holiness and confidence.

Satan was the true enemy, the one who wanted to afflict Job with sickness and poverty. God, certainly foreseeing how he would bless Job even more, permitted him to be tested, but only to a point. What Satan intended for evil, God intended for good, and Job came out of all this healthier, wealthier, happier. He even received a spectacular vision and direct appearance of God, one which many of the prophets under covenant did not receive, and where God gave him a long lecture about himself and his ways. It was an extended and explicit revelation that transformed Job's perspective and deepened his understanding of divine wisdom and sovereignty.

Just thinking about this makes us jealous. Ah, but we do not need to be jealous, because we can read all that happened to Job and what God said to him, and not have to suffer the same things to gain this revelation. In any case, the encounter was a privilege the likes of which few had experienced, showing God's desire to reveal himself to those who trust in him. Job was a righteous man, but he was also ignorant of certain things about God's attributes and purposes. God told him so at the end, and said that Job spoke without knowledge. But even in ignorance, steadfast faith invites divine revelation, which resolves the ignorance, and then it results in divine intervention and blessing.

Job did not have anything like the covenant of Abraham, and nothing close to the covenant of Christ that explicitly grants power over Satan. He did not have the revelation that we possess in Christ today. Now through the name of Jesus, believers have been given authority over Satan, the same Satan that destroyed Job's family, and his health and wealth. Paul wrote that Christ disarmed the powers and authorities, triumphing over them by the cross. This victory has

profound implications for believers. We do not need to fear Satan's attacks. We have the power to banish him in the name of Jesus. The limitations of Job cannot apply to Christians.

When Jesus walked the earth, he went about healing the sick, casting out demons, and manifesting the compassion of God in tangible and miraculous ways. As Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him." Jesus called sickness satanic bondage and proclaimed freedom for those bound by it. He demonstrated that health and prosperity are God's desire for his people. Job's restoration foreshadows this greater revelation, showing us that God delights in healing and blessing, even before this ultimate covenant of Christ was revealed. The stark contrast between Job's era and our present exaltation in Christ reveals the extent and the nature of God's mercy and the abundant life now within our reach.

It is a travesty that Christians look to the story of Job as an example of unexplained suffering as well as faithful piety under such conditions. He did not know what brought the suffering, but we know. He did not have a contract that he could invoke to call for deliverance, but we do. He did not have a name that is above every other name to banish the evil forces that attacked him, but we have. To directly apply Job's situation to our own is tantamount to renouncing the blood and the name of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to Scripture, faithless religious people claim that health and wealth are not the effects of faith, that sickness could be a gift and poverty could enhance holiness. This perspective contradicts the lessons of Job even when he was without a covenant. His sicknesses and tragedies were not gifts from God. They were attacks from Satan, through which the devil intended to destroy him and make him abandon God.

On the other hand, God did not leave Job in suffering. He revealed himself to Job in a supernatural way. He healed Job's body, and multiplied his wealth. The sicknesses and tragedies were not a manifestation of God's mercy, but they were the assaults and schemes of Satan. The healing and prosperity that came after were the manifestations of God's mercy. The Bible says this in explicit terms. There is no room for faithless theological manipulations.

Faithless preachers and scholars continue to mislead the people of God. They glorify suffering as if God delights in watching his children endure misery without reprieve. They lead God's people into unbelief and rebellion, convincing them that healing and prosperity are not for them, that they should tolerate their suffering, that they should feel guilty to even think that faith could bring deliverance and success. These false teachers are accomplices of Satan, aiding him in keeping God's people bound in misery.

Will they escape judgment? May God avenge those who have suffered because of them. They who refuse God's people their rightful inheritance, may all the suffering that they preach come upon them – as God said, "I will do to you the very thing I heard you say" – and may the healing

and prosperity they deny be taken from them, and given to those who have faith in God's mercy and grace.

Make Him Your Dwelling Place

Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place – the Most High, who is my refuge – no harm will come to you, no plague come near your tent. (Psalm 91:9-10)

To receive God's protection, make the Lord your dwelling place. It is a choice to confess that God is your refuge and security. The Bible says that those who choose to make God their refuge will experience his protection, but even such a simple exhortation has been complicated by controversies over divine sovereignty and lordship.

There are people who favor certain doctrines in Scripture and forcibly make them contradict other doctrines in Scripture, and even deny that these other doctrines are taught by Scripture at all. They imagine themselves theologically astute and orthodox, but they lack the ability to grasp biblical doctrines in a coherent fashion. The result is not that they at least remain faithful to several doctrines, since they misconstrue even those doctrines that they adore, but they outright reject the biblical doctrines that they hate, so that they become enemies of the Christian faith.

So, there are those who love their formulation of the sovereignty of God and predestination, and enforce the false implication that it is wrong to speak of "making Jesus the Lord of your life." Among other invalid reasons, they are opposed to this language because to them it seems to imply that Christ's lordship depends on human decision. According to them, any suggestion that we could "make" Jesus Lord denies God's sovereignty. They insist that Christ is Lord irrespective of human acknowledgment, that his lordship is an immutable fact our actions cannot alter. For them, the notion of making Jesus Lord appears to be an affront to God's sovereign authority.

This is a case of people having transformed biblical doctrines into their human traditions, and becoming so obsessed with these traditions that the biblical doctrines are no longer interpreted on their own terms and contexts, but instead are made to contradict other biblical doctrines. The result is that these people pretend to be experts and pretend to be precise, but end up becoming the worst theologians in the room.

The language of someone "making" Jesus the Lord of his life is merely the language of acknowledgment. It expresses personal faith and submission, not the idea that Jesus lacked authority beforehand. It is perfectly acceptable, even excellent, for someone to make Jesus his "personal Lord and Savior." The Bible records people who were saved with far less precise and far less formal language. We should not tolerate preachers who claim to preach salvation in Jesus while behaving like the Pharisees who murdered him.

The psalm says that those who make the Lord their dwelling place receive supernatural protection, emphasizing that trusting in God directly leads to experiencing it. This is one thing that those who oppose such language cannot do. They lack the faith to do something like this, and so they criticize the people who have faith to make God their protection from all kinds of

troubles. This choice to trust in God is at the heart of the promise, and it highlights that making God our refuge is the key to receiving his care. It is a conscious affirmation of the power and faithfulness of God, and this is something that honors him.

Of course God is sovereign, and this means that when someone makes Jesus his personal Lord and Savior, God has already chosen this person and has been working in his heart. But the person still chooses Jesus and makes him Lord. When God causes a person to stand, the person is indeed standing, and you can say that he is standing. When God causes a person to walk, the person is indeed walking, and you can say that this person is walking. When God causes a person to make Jesus Lord, the person indeed does it, and the word "make" means a personal faith and acknowledgment.

To make Jesus the Lord of your life simply means you acknowledge and confess his lordship. It is not a statement about the power of the human will to enthrone Christ, but a recognition of what is already true, that Jesus is indeed Lord, and that we, by his grace, align ourselves under his authority. The Bible says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Jesus is Lord over the reprobates as well, and since they do not "make" Jesus their Lord, they will burn in hell.

Why then, do we use the language of "making" him Lord? Because the Bible does it! The real issue is, if you refuse to do it or refuse to let others do it, will you be saved? Religious people might not like this language regardless, and this is why we must keep using it. Do it again and again, especially if they are listening, as a testimony against them. It is honorable and pleasant to enrage them. Throw in all the words that trigger them. Preach to everyone, "Make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life! Make the decision. Confess him as your Lord, and you will be saved."

The language of making Jesus Lord, choosing Jesus, or asking him to come into our hearts is deeply embedded in the fabric of Christian thought and practice. It is language that Scripture endorses. To deny this language in the name of defending divine sovereignty or theological precision, or for any other reason, is to reject Scripture. God does not see a conflict between his sovereign grace and the human response he demands. The very act of making Jesus Lord, choosing him, and abiding in him is itself a work of God in the human heart. It is a response that God causes people to give him, but religious people want to snatch this away from God. But let us "make" God everything that he wants us to make him.

Psalm 91 speaks to the blessings of making God our refuge. Those who make God their dwelling place are shielded from harm. This is not only talking about spiritual and psychological protection, because the psalm refers to deaths and diseases. It is a promise of tangible and physical protection. To abide in God is to experience his care and to be confident in his defense. As Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you." This is a command to make him our dwelling place.

To make Jesus our Lord and refuge is not something that originates in us, but it is the result of God's prior work. As Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." Therefore, we choose

him because he has chosen us. We make him Lord of our lives because he has made us his own. We abide in him because he abides in us. It is all of grace, but the making and the choosing still happen. You make him Lord because he had made you his child. You choose him as Savior because he has chosen you to be saved. Our actions are the manifestation of God's sovereign grace at work within us.

This is basic Christianity, and it reflects the kind of language that the Bible uses. To insist that believers should not speak of making Jesus Lord is to allow the eccentricities of a religious conception of a biblical doctrine to eclipse the testimony of Scripture. When people emphasize a doctrine in a way that it makes the language of Scripture appear incorrect, then their conception and application of it must be wrong. It is time they "make" themselves shut up. Never allow the eccentricities of human philosophy, even when they masquerade as doctrinal precision, to lead you away from the truth of Scripture.

The doctrine of divine sovereignty is not an excuse to reject biblical language or to deny the call to respond to God's grace. The Bible's exhortation to make God our dwelling place, to choose the Most High as our refuge, far from undermining God's sovereignty, is an appeal to his sovereign work in our hearts. God, in his sovereignty, has ordained that we make the decision to come to him, that we trust in him, and that we confess Jesus as Lord and to make him our personal Savior. To refuse this language is not a defense of God's sovereignty, but a denial of how God himself has chosen to work in and through his people. It is to make what started as a biblical doctrine into a personal ideology, and then turn around and use this ideology to attack God himself. This was how the Pharisees ended up killing the Son of God. Now Christians repeat it daily.

Miracles and a Pure Church

As recorded in Acts 5, the apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people, and the power of God was visibly manifest. One of the most striking events was the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira. This couple lied to the Holy Spirit about the proceeds from the sale of their land, attempting to deceive the apostles and the church. As a result, both Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead by God. The divine judgment brought great fear upon the whole church and all who heard about it. It demonstrated that deceit and hypocrisy had no place in the community of believers. The immediate and supernatural punishment of those who lied served to maintain the purity of the church, and it ensured that only those who were genuinely committed dared to join. This fear of God, coupled with the many signs and wonders performed by the believers, meant that no one dared to join them who had ulterior motives, even though the apostles were highly regarded by the people. The presence of miracles did not encourage sensationalism or produce false converts but rather repelled those who were not sincere. God's power was so real and tangible that it terrified pretenders, driving them away from the church.

The same principle was at work in Acts 19, where the fear of the name of Jesus spread through the region, causing even the sorcerers to repent and burn their scrolls. In Ephesus, God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so much so that when handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, their illnesses were cured and evil spirits left them. When some Jewish exorcists invokes the name of Jesus without faith, they were overpowered by the demon-possessed man they tried to exorcise. This event became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, and fear seized them all. The name of Jesus was held in high honor. Many who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. The power of God was evident, and the fear of God led to repentance. The miracles served to purify the church and the community, ensuring that only those who were sincere remained, while the pretenders and sorcerers were exposed.

The Faithless complain that the ministry of miracles attract false converts, those who come for the spectacle, the excitement, or the benefits. They suggest that this culture of miracles undermines the integrity of the church, that it compromises the purity of the faith. This argument is wrong, and it is a manifestation of unbelief. God can use miracles to repel false converts and keep the church pure. Miracles serve as a sieve, separating those who are genuinely seeking God from those who are merely curious, from those who wish to think of themselves as religious, and from those who want to present themselves as people of faith while having no real faith in their hearts. This is true in proportion to the strength of the miracles. Many miracles are useful. Some are spectacular. And even stronger miracles can become frightening to those who do not know God. Although all miracles will contribute, it is especially this kind of miracles that will keep the church pure. We should reach for the strongest kind of miracles through faith, prayer, and teaching.

The Faithless are like those they claim miracles would attract. They are the insincere and uncommitted ones. They want to be seen as spiritual, they want the appearance of faith, but

they lack the reality. They undermine the ministry of miracles because miracles are a constant reminder of their pretense and impotence. They are unable to disguise themselves in the presence of the supernatural. Miracles expose them for what they are: imposters, hypocrites, faithless religionists. They wish to present themselves as defenders of truth, but in reality, they are the enemies of faith, the enemies of God's power.

Strong and evident miracles purify the church because they terrify those who are not committed. They drive away those who wish to maintain a religious appearance but who resent the gospel in their hearts. This is why the ministry of miracles is essential to the church. It is not a peripheral issue, it is not a secondary agenda, but it is central to the mission. The ministry of miracles is an agenda of spirituality, purity, and faithfulness. It is not an agenda of carnality or sensationalism, as the Faithless begs us to believe. It is the expression of the power and presence of God among his people.

We must push this agenda as aggressively as we can. The ministry of miracles has always been central to God's work. The troubles and impurities in the church are significantly due to the insufficient demonstration of God's power, both in terms of miracles of blessing and miracles of judgment. Faithless people suggest that the emphasis on miracles is a distraction from the gospel, but the truth is that miracles amplify the gospel message. They confront people with both blessing and judgment. They draw attention to the truth and demand a response. They do not tolerate endless debate as a way to delay obedience. When the church operates in the power of God, it becomes an unstoppable witness to the risen Christ. This is the very thing that the Faithless – those "Christians" – are afraid of.

Cessationists have rejected the power of God due to their lack of faith, integrity, and intelligence. They have cast out the Spirit of God from the church. They have treated him as a demon, and in doing so, it is certain that many of them have committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin. They have exchanged the living power of God for human traditions, and in doing so, they have welcomed false doctrines, false converts, and false spirits to take root in the church. Their faithlessness has opened the door to the enemy, and the church and humanity have suffered because of it. This path of unbelief can only lead the church further into irrelevance and destruction. Yet God has always reserved a remnant for himself, people who continue to have faith in his promises and miracles. But even greater blessings will come when more people welcome the Spirit of God back into their midst. Then the church will become truly pure and holy.

More Faith, More Miracles

Criticisms persist against the miracle ministry of Jesus Christ. They come from the Faithless such as cessationists and religious people who cling to their human heritages and traditions. They are threatened by the miracles and blessings of God, because there is no place for God in their religion. It is only a shell to make people believe that they are devout and holy. When the reality shows up – when God shows up in miracles and blessings – their phony piety is exposed. So they become angry against the truth of the gospel, and they are determined to crucify Jesus Christ over and over again until he disappears. People like these are the most wicked, hypocritical, and damnable individuals in the history of humanity.

Just as the word of God cannot be chained, no matter how hard the Faithless try, the power of God cannot be confined to a specific time and purpose in history. Scripture teaches that it takes only faith to see God's miraculous works in our lives. Miracles are not just memories, now functioning as mere metaphors for our pretty sermons. They are not only proofs of new revelations or of the divinity of Christ. Rather, they are the inevitable effects of God's very existence, and they are manifestations of God's compassion and faithfulness.

The ministry of miracles depends largely on the faith of those who desire to benefit from it. When Jesus was in his hometown of Nazareth, he preached to the people, but they did not accept him. Then the Bible says, "And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief." If miracles were mainly intended to prove his divine identity and to authenticate revelation, then we would expect the opposite, that he would have performed even greater miracles in the face of unbelief to overcome their skepticism. Instead, he could do no mighty work there because of that unbelief.

Jesus never declared, "According to God's will, according to my power, my divinity, and because of new revelations, let it be done to you." Instead, he emphasized, "According to your faith, let it be done to you." The miracle-working power of Jesus was never the issue, but it was whether people would believe. Faith was the determining factor, the gateway through which divine power flowed into human circumstances. When the woman with the bleeding disease touched the edge of his garment, she was healed not because Jesus decided in that moment to exercise his power, but because she believed. He was not even aware of her until she touched him and until she already received her healing. Jesus turned to her and said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you." God's power is always available, but it is faith that receives this power or brings it to manifestation.

Paul's letter to the Galatians reinforces this. The Galatians were slipping away from the principle of faith, so Paul interrogated them. He wrote, "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" He reminded them that miracles were not something they attained by keeping the law or following rituals and traditions. We receive the Holy Spirit because we have faith in the word of God. We receive miracles because we believe the gospel. He used this to argue that we receive other

things from God in the same way, such as our justification. Just as people are justified by faith in any period in history, miracles happen in any period in history because of faith. Just as we are justified by faith, and not by a special manifestation of spiritual gifts in the evangelists or in ourselves, we can receive miracles by faith regardless of whether there are any spiritual gifts. Miracles happen because of faith in the word of God. The more faith there is, and the more people who have faith, the more miracles there will be. If there are spiritual gifts, it just means that there will be even more miracles.

This principle is especially prominent in the ministry of healing. Most healing miracles occur because the individuals who seek healing place their faith in the word of God. This is why Jesus often took time to teach before he healed, and why he emphasized faith. There are indeed instances when people are healed through spiritual gifts or because God has anointed a Christian with the Spirit for the ministry of healing. These manifestations are sometimes effective independent of the recipient's faith. Thousands of miracles might happen by special manifestations, but compared to healing through faith, such cases are still the exception rather than the rule.

Perhaps the most frequent mistake in healing ministry is to pray too soon. Many Christians, because they feel confident or because they are eager to help, would immediately pray for a person without first discerning whether he has the faith to receive. Jesus did not do this. He did not begin to heal individuals indiscriminately. He taught the people. Then he talked to those who came to him for healing. He asked them what they wanted. He asked them if they believed. This point may seem unexciting and, for that reason, is often underestimated. Yet it is the single most important insight for increasing effectiveness in every aspect of supernatural ministry. It confronts the one error that is by far the most destructive and self-defeating in the ministry of healing.

You might feel confident. You might have a lot of faith. This is good and relevant. But the sick person might not have faith, and that is often decisive. Never direct the person to depend on you or your gifts, but direct him to have faith in God. Do not lose your judgment due to arrogance. Slow down. Take time to talk to the person. Discern whether he has faith to receive healing. If he does not, it is not cruel to refrain from praying immediately. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. If a person lacks faith, the remedy is not immediate prayer, but the word of God. Speak to him. Teach him something. Give him something to believe. Tell him the promises of God concerning healing. Build his faith until he is ready to receive. Praying for a person who has no faith sets him up for disappointment, which often leads to deeper unbelief. If he does not receive healing, he might conclude that healing is not God's will for him, or that miracles of healing do not happen at all, and his heart may become more hardened.

When ministering to a mass audience, it is more difficult to offer each person individual attention, so it is even more important to teach before praying for the sick. Jesus did not randomly move through crowds, healing without context or instruction. He was teaching and preaching all the time. He built up faith and understanding in the people, and this opened the door for miracles. When faced with individuals who exhibit unbelief, it is usually better to leave

them be, as Jesus did when he left Nazareth. Alternatively, create opportunities for further teaching. Encourage them to attend more sessions to hear the word of God to strengthen their faith and correct their misconceptions. To proceed with prayer in the face of obvious unbelief is usually counterproductive. The person might not receive, and his unbelief will be reinforced by the apparent failure.

The ministry of Jesus was characterized by compassion and power, but also by an insistence on faith. He could have overwhelmed his opponents with miraculous displays, silencing their objections with sheer force. Indeed, the records show that certain miracles of judgment happened in the ministries of the early disciples, when God would strike some people blind and cause others to drop dead. When the presence of God is strong among his people and when his people are full of faith, we can expect these things to happen today. It is irrelevant what time in history we are living in. In any case, when it came to the miracles of healing, Jesus and the early disciples preached the word of God to build faith in the people. Some healing miracles happened because of spiritual gifts, but as Paul indicated, the standard way for miracles to happen was by the faith of the people who accepted the gospel.