

Borders

Volume 3

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Not Ashamed of Grace

Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." He embraced the gospel with confidence and conviction. He was not embarrassed of Jesus Christ or timid about the Christian faith. He knew that it was the power of God, and it was humanity's only hope. This is the same gospel that we have inherited. We hold in our hands this power of God to save humanity.

Why did Paul need this confidence and conviction in the first place? What kind of awful message did he preach that he faced pressure to be ashamed of it? He faced opposition because he preached good news. He preached grace instead of effort and sacrifice. He preached about the cross of Christ to save humanity instead of our suffering to save ourselves.

Paul preached that salvation is by grace through faith, apart from works, so that no one can boast. It was a message that upset the religious establishment of his day. They accused him of promoting lawlessness, of undermining righteousness by declaring that God's grace was sufficient, even without the works of the law. The accusation was that a message of grace could be interpreted as permission to sin.

It was not the pagans who most strongly opposed the message of grace, but it was the religious people. The Pharisees, the scribes, and all those who wanted to achieve their own righteousness were the fiercest critics. They viewed Paul as a threat to the established religious order, a preacher of an immoral doctrine, a subversive who challenged their perception of loyalty to God. But Paul understood that this gospel, this good news, was the way that God revealed to humanity. It was the only way to salvation, and the only way that could glorify God.

Grace is scandalous and offensive. It takes away all the religious credit from people, and so they slander it as a message of licentiousness. It is also seditious. It removes the illusion that the religious establishment has the power to save anyone, or that it is the bridge between God and humanity. The gospel of grace teaches that God is the only one who can save, and that he saves only through faith in Jesus Christ. Human doctrines and traditions cannot save anyone. Human institutions do not have authority to govern your relationship with God.

The good news is that anyone can become a priest in Christ and approach God through faith, and no one needs to rely on institutional religion for spiritual awakening and salvation, or even for psychological support. This is why the religious establishment hates the gospel. It hates good news because it is bad for business. It wants to preach religion as bad news that can be managed only if you depend on their doctrines and institutions, and only if you respect their religious history and heritage.

This opposition against grace and against good news has continued to this day. Mainstream orthodoxy continues to glorify human authority and mediation, rituals, sacraments, and special days, even as they pretend to champion a message of grace. Nevertheless, grace for the salvation of our souls has become more established, and religious people tend to offer it at

least lip service in order to maintain a semblance of legitimacy. But they often affirm grace for salvation only in pretense. And whether or not in pretense, this is as far as they would allow grace to invade their turf. For them, religion must remain bad news, so that they can use it to keep the people dependent on them and so that they can control these people.

Just as Paul faced persecution for preaching grace for salvation, Christians today face persecution for preaching grace for healing and prosperity, grace for miracles and blessings, grace for confidence in prayer, and grace for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Faithless religion contends that these biblical doctrines are dangerous, that they promote greed, selfishness, carnality, and fanaticism. This is the same strategy of misdirection that the Faithless used to condemn the gospel of grace when Paul preached it. They called his gospel a message of licentiousness, as if they themselves were models of purity and holiness!

Thus grace remains scandalous and offensive, not because it is a message of sin and greed, but because it is a message that depends on God alone and glorifies God alone, and it is a message that produces no positive effect in reprobates who cannot have faith. And grace remains just as seditious as ever. It overturns human authority and elitism, and the institutions that are established upon these corrupt qualities.

The Faithless accuse those who preach about receiving these blessings through faith as distorting religion into something for personal gain. So what? Even the salvation of the soul is for personal gain! What? Do they think that God is the one getting saved when we believe in Jesus Christ? Their complaint is a deception. It is a misdirection that makes them look like they care about God and truth, when in fact they wish to turn you away from faith and grace. In Christ, we are the ones who receive all the benefits. He is the one who gives and sacrifices. This is grace, and grace benefits us and glorifies him. Faithless people hate it. They hate God so much. And if you believe in grace, they will hate you too.

The attack against grace for healing and prosperity is remarkably similar to what the early disciples faced. The problem is not that these things contradict the gospel, but that they threaten those who are established in their human orthodoxy and who find that they cannot have faith. Grace challenges their religious sensibilities and assumptions. Grace undermines their self-effort, and it mocks their meaningless suffering and sacrifice. It devalues their sense of personal righteousness, a sense of righteousness that comes from self-admiration rather than faith in God.

Just as those who persecuted Paul could not tolerate a grace that forgives and saves without demanding effort and suffering, faithless religious people still cannot tolerate a grace that freely offers health, wealth, miracles, peace, favor, and hundreds of other blessings to those who believe, without demanding people to either sacrifice these things or to acquire them by human effort and wisdom. Historic human orthodoxy detests this entire worldview of grace. They seethe at the good news of Jesus Christ.

However, the grace of God is one, just as God himself is one. The Bible reveals that his name is "the Lord who heals" and "the Lord will provide" just as much as it reveals that his name is salvation and righteousness. If you believe in salvation, you must believe in healing and prosperity; otherwise, you would have no basis to believe in salvation. If a person rejects one thing that God has revealed about himself, it exposes the fact that he rejects God, so that he rejects everything about God, because it is the same God who has revealed everything. What this person believes about God is not faith in God or in the gospel, but it is the person's own religious ideology. A human ideology never saves anyone.

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he was not ashamed of God, and he revealed in this message that could save everyone who believes. He was not ashamed of the good news even though his enemies thought that he was unspiritual and sacrilegious for preaching it. But the message of grace has never been limited to spiritual salvation, just as sin did not result only in spiritual corruption. And God has never been a finite deity like the idols of myths and fables, who ruled over definite categories and limited territories.

Historic human orthodoxy has always treated God as nothing more than one of the heathen idols. Even though they may regard him as the chief idol, this idol offers only spiritual salvation and promises blessings only for the next life. But if they worship such an idol, then they have never believed in the true God, and this means they cannot even attain this spiritual salvation that their idol represents. The logic is undeniable. Nevertheless, we will not press the issue further, for the grace of God is indeed great. The point is that the ones who reject God's grace in healing, prosperity, miracles, and other blessings are those who should be persecuted. They are the ones who should be ashamed and embarrassed.

Salvation is the restoration of everything lost through the fall, and then it offers a lot more than that. It includes healing for the body, prosperity in all areas of life, superhuman abilities through faith, and the fullness of peace and joy. Salvation is wholeness. To preach healing and prosperity, and the ability to receive these things through faith, is to preach the same gospel that Paul preached. When we confess, "Jesus himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses," we declare that the work of Christ is complete, that his sacrifice is sufficient, and that his suffering can produce miracles when we believe and affirm the gospel. And this is only one example among hundreds of blessings that belong to us through Jesus Christ.

On Other People's Failures

Christians often allow the failures of others to dictate their own thoughts and judgments, as if other people's defeats could set the standard for sound doctrine. But the Bible says, "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?" Only the spirit of a man knows his own thoughts. We may observe someone's actions, we may hear his words, and witness his outcome, but his deepest beliefs and inner struggles are hidden, perceived only by God and himself. God alone searches hearts and minds. He alone directly knows the genuineness of a person's faith. We must guard our own faith, and ensure that it rests on the word of God rather than the circumstances of other people.

We do not know what another person truly believes. Perhaps he failed because he doubted and wavered in his faith. Perhaps he followed a historic religious heritage instead of the gospel, and became entangled by human doctrines and traditions. Perhaps he trusted in sacraments instead of the word of God, and in his own suffering instead of grace. Perhaps he harbored secret sins, or was deceived by Satan in some way not known to us. There are many possibilities. We do not know. We can only speculate, and it is useless to speculate. What we know is that his failure should mean nothing to us. Allowing another person's failure to affect our confidence is to anchor our soul to his private struggles and circumstances.

Suppose a preacher experienced tremendous success in the ministry of healing, but then he himself died from sickness. There are people who, based on something like this, claim that it is not God's will to heal everyone after all, or that the promise of God is not to heal everyone, even when they have faith. It is almost never suggested that this man probably did not have faith for his own healing. People love to use another person's failure to shape their doctrine and confirm their unbelief, when they ought to blame the failure on that person himself.

Who knows what the preacher believed? You say, "He prayed for many others, and they received healing." But perhaps those people believed, and this preacher never did. There have been cases where an evangelist led many people to Christ, only to discover after many years that he had never been saved. Perhaps the preacher had faith for others to receive healing, but for some reason, possibly due to some religious hangup or deception, he never had faith for his own healing. We cannot know the condition of his heart, and his experience cannot guide our beliefs.

God's word alone must be our authority. The failures of others, even if they are apostles and prophets in the Bible, cannot supplant the facts of redemption and the explicit promises of God. This ought to be obvious, but it appears most Christians are too stupid to realize this. And of course, the Faithless are eager to seize on any excuse to undermine the benefits of the gospel. Rather than speculate about another person's failure, we should examine our own hearts, and trust only in God's word. The failures of others can serve as a reminder of our need to remain watchful. However, their failures are theirs alone. We do not have to experience the same failures.

Take Saul as an example. Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel and initially appeared to be a man suited to lead the people. He exhibited humility, and had several spiritual experiences and moments of victory. But beneath the surface, his heart became filled with pride, jealousy, and disobedience. His rebellion against God's commands and his relentless pursuit of David revealed the true state of his spirit. Saul had turned away from God, but it was not immediately apparent, and his decline led to God's rejection and a tragic end. His story warns us that spiritual failure often begins with compromises and unchecked pride.

Consider also Judas Iscariot. He portrayed himself as a loyal disciple, but his heart became filled with greed and betrayal. He walked with Jesus, heard his teachings, and witnessed his miracles, but the true condition of Judas was far worse than anyone realized. It seemed only Jesus knew. When he betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, it became clear that his appearance of faithfulness was masking his spiritual decay. His tragic end reminds us that a person's actions can conceal a contrary inner reality. His spiritual decline remained hidden. It was not obvious to the other disciples close to him.

Another example is Ananias and Sapphira in the early church. They appeared to be generous participants in the Christian community, selling a piece of property and bringing a portion of the proceeds to the apostles. However, their attempt to deceive the community and gain recognition revealed the corruption in their hearts. Their immediate judgment reminds us that God is able to see beyond our outward displays of holiness and generosity. Those who are actively involved in the church can still suffer decay beneath a veneer of piety. Their true condition was not obvious until God struck them down. But God does not immediately punish everyone who experiences failure in their faith. Most inner failures are never discovered in this life.

We can discuss these examples because there were signs of deterioration and rebellion, but with most people, including some in the Bible who died in sickness or tragedy, we will never know what truly led to their end, so that we can only speculate. There could be an obvious explanation for each case if we knew what was happening in their private lives, but we do not know. Certainly, we cannot say that because they experienced an undesirable ending, then we will probably experience something like it. We cannot say that since someone who appeared spiritual experienced a failure, then God never promised to deliver us from it, or that God's promise must be interpreted by that failure. Yet, this is how most people -- absolute, total morons -- approach Scripture.

However, we can know the word of God, and we can know ourselves. It is possible to explain and prevent our own failures. If Satan can deceive us into thinking that failure is inevitable and unpredictable, then he can neutralize even the most explicit promises of God for our salvation, healing, and success. This is what Satan has done with most Christians, so that this kind of thinking has become universal and uncontested. But if we will focus only on the word of God and become unaffected and even uninterested in the failures of others, then Satan's strategy cannot work on us.

You cannot know what another man believes, especially if you do not know him in person and have never spoken to him. If a Christian claimed to have faith for healing but died of sickness, you cannot know if he truly believed. You cannot know if he prayed for it at all when he was by himself, and you cannot know what he said when he prayed. Did he pray with confidence in the word of God, or did he resign his fate to some unknown decree, using that as his excuse? Did he express certainty, or did he wallow in false piety and humility? You do not know.

But what is that to you? Why do you care? I don't care at all. I have the word of God. As Jesus said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You follow me!" He said that in a different context, but it remains true that we should follow Jesus and not focus on what happens to other disciples. I have even seen people point to the failures of others in order to anticipate their own possible failure in the future, and in a way that suggests they could believe and perform perfectly, yet end tragically due to the will of God. They wish to appear balanced and humble. The truth is that they are not following Jesus Christ. They are using other people to make excuses.

There have been many Christians who maintained their faith to the end, and they died in peace and prosperity, without sickness and without tragedy. If you are affected by other people's examples, why not focus on these instead? Do you see the deception? Many Christians experience a crisis of faith whenever they are disappointed in someone. They see a leader fall into sin, and suddenly they question God's power to keep his people from stumbling. They watch a close friend turn away from the faith, and doubt begins to gnaw at their own convictions. Such reactions reveal a low intelligence and an improper focus. If your faith is that dependent on those around you, it is no faith at all. Your house is built on sand, and it will not stand against a storm. God's word is the only solid foundation.

Why should I care when that preacher died in sickness and tragedy? Perhaps he did not have faith. You might wish to believe that he had faith, but you cannot know that he did. If we assume what the Bible teaches instead of what appearances suggest, then the preacher did not have faith for his healing. If we have no information to make a more nuanced judgment, then this is the most probable explanation. Why should I waver even when a prophet in the Bible became sick and died? Unless the Bible specifies the reason and wants to teach me a lesson out of it, I don't care why it happened. If the Bible does not say, then I don't care. I still have God's promise. God has not died, and God has not gotten sick. Why should I care about anything else? Satan and Judas are also in the Bible. I do not follow their examples; instead, the Bible teaches me principles to judge and condemn them.

The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart, but he committed murder and adultery. Does that mean I should also commit murder and adultery? The explicit teachings of the Bible forbid these things. Both the teachings and the examples are recorded in Scripture, but I take the explicit commands of God to interpret the actions of David, not the other way around. I do not take the actions of David to redefine the commands of God. The fact that the actions of David are recorded in Scripture means that they really happened, and the commands of God recorded in Scripture show me that David was really wrong in doing those things.

Peter is another example. He was an apostle, but he made a mistake when he avoided the Gentiles, and Paul rebuked him in front of everyone. Regardless of Peter's action, the truth is clear. Anyone who has faith in Jesus is clean in the sight of God. No one, not even an apostle, should cause us to stumble on this point.

When it comes to sin, Christians know to think this way, but when it comes to the benefits of faith like healing and prosperity, favor and protection, suddenly they interpret the Bible in reverse. Now human failures shackle divine promises. Why? Because faithless religious people are lunatics, and clinically stupid. In fact, David's failure reminds me to follow God's commands even more, making me more likely to succeed where he failed. Peter's error warns me never to compromise the fact that whoever has faith is a child of God, regardless of human categories. Likewise, when a prophet in the Bible died of sickness, it reminds me to believe God's promises even more, so that I can live a long life and die in peace and health.

Why should I care if another person did not receive healing? Why should I care even if a prophet in the Bible died of sickness? The Bible promises me healing, and more than that, it teaches me that the healing is accomplished. It says, "Himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses." Who knows why that prophet died? Who knows what he believed? But I know why Jesus died. And I know what he believed. So I will take the word of God and interpret other people's experiences. I will say that they sinned, or wavered, or failed, although I might not know how. But I refuse to deny the promises of God and preach a different gospel in order to accommodate their failures or to excuse my own.

God's word alone is the authority that shapes our beliefs. Men's failures are varied and numerous, but they do not nullify the promises of God. When Israel doubted and rebelled in the wilderness, it was not God's word that failed. The next generation believed, and they experienced his promises. When David sinned grievously, God did not revoke his covenant. God remained faithful, even though David faltered. And when David repented, he continued to live in health and wealth, and the joy of salvation. Do not tether your soul to the fragile faith or unknown condition of another man. Anchor yourself to the word of God, and you will never be moved.

Reach for a Miracle

"Why sit we here until we die?" (2 Kings 7:3)

Faith is more than a mindset. Anyone can possess some degree of optimism. It may lead to improved performance, but it cannot promise victory or produce supernatural result. Faith is a disposition of confidence that comes from God's action in our spirits. This confidence is not a mere attitude that removes self-imposed limitations and that releases our human potential. Faith is far beyond this. Faith breaks into another dimension of solutions and possibilities, and releases divine potential. Faith counts on a God whose nature is to work signs and wonders, a God who promises to perform miracles for those who look to him.

This faith separates us from sinners, who have been made in the image of God, but who think and behave like unreasoning animals. This faith distinguishes us from the Faithless. They include religious people who claim to worship God, but who renounce his promises of success. They claim to have faith in Jesus Christ, but they condemn those who have faith for the miracles that he promised. They ordain themselves to teach Scripture, but they teach against what Scripture says. The Faithless are worse than unbelievers. They are religious and hypocritical sinners.

Faith comes from the promises of God, but it also comes from a knowledge of what kind of God he is. In the Bible, we see many individuals who received from God whatever they wanted even without a specific promise from him. They had boldness to ask from God, to take from him, and to overcome obstacles and subdue kingdoms by his power. This confidence came from a general knowledge of the nature of God and the word of God.

He is a God who can do all things and who delights in working miracles. Because you know this, you can pray for a miracle and receive it. Because you know this, you can receive healing from him. Because you know this, you can cast out demons and diseases from other people in the name of Jesus. Of course faith comes from the promises from God, but a general knowledge about God is just as important and powerful. This is because what is true about God in general cannot be contradicted by specific situations. What is true about God is always true. For example, since God is all-knowing, you do not need a specific revelation that he knows about a situation you face. He knows about it. Do not underestimate what a general knowledge about God can do for your faith. Think about God's broad attributes and actions. Then apply that to every case.

The heroes of faith in Scripture performed mighty deeds, even though they lacked the specifics and details that we now possess in the completed Bible. What little they knew about God was more than enough for them to take for granted that God would stand on their side, that he would answer their prayers and work miracles. On the other hand, Christians often disregard what is always true about God, but impose very specific and nuanced standards on themselves as they search the Scriptures for something that would address their needs. This is unnecessary

and foolish. The difficulty is self-inflicted, and they cause themselves to stumble. More revelation should work for us, not against us.

When Jesus taught about faith, he often spoke in generalities. He made broad statements and sweeping promises that encompassed every situation. He said that if we have faith, we could command a mountain to throw itself into the sea. Presumably, we would never need to move a mountain, but the statement covers all the situations we do face. The statement is literally true, that a command of faith can move a physical mountain, but it is not meant to limit the power of faith to moving a mountain. Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still, and God made it happen.

Jesus also said, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you shall receive." He made large and general promises. It is popular to teach that we should always find a verse in Scripture that promises what we desire, or that we should always be specific in prayer. This is false, and it contradicts the teachings and examples in Scripture. It does not require a specific promise from God to receive what we ask, and there is no need to state our prayer with exact precision to receive what we desire. Prayer is not a magical incantation. God who knows all things. Jesus said that God knows what you want before you pray.

When we have faith, we can move forward and obtain victory. Faith is the beginning of action. You say, "God can bless me even if I sit here. I can pray with faith and welcome God's blessing." This is true. Never let anyone tell you that this is impossible or that God never operates this way. God can act before you act. But it is also true that you can take action and reach for miracles. God will stand with you and support you. God will go in front of you to arrange your success. God will multiply your efforts. When you do something, God will do something. And when God acts, miracles will happen.

We see action as empowerment, not requirement. It does not have to be strenuous and daring action. There were four lepers who said, "Why sit here until we die?" So they stumbled toward the opposing camp. God made their footsteps into thunderous noise and shaking, and chased away the enemies. Even a word of prayer or a cry of help toward God is an action, when there is nothing more we can do. When we refer to action, we do not mean that you need to help yourself after all, as if God will not do enough to help you. By itself, the action you take might be far from sufficient to seize victory, but you count on God to take action with you.

Faith is the end of despair. It moves you to action regardless of your feelings. You can act even when you feel afraid. You can open your mouth to say something even when you are sad. You can make your body move and do something even when you feel hopeless. You are not expected to save yourself. You are not expected to work a miracle by your own effort. But faith moves you out of the place of hopelessness, out of self-pity, out of passivity, and out of a defeated attitude. So you do something.

As with many aspects of faith, the ministry of healing provides a vivid illustration. Jesus said that those who have faith will lay hands on the sick, and the sick will recover. When a Christian

reads these words, he grasps the meaning and he envisions it happening. The teaching implants the possibility and the confidence. Previously, he might be immobilized by fear and despair in the face of an incurable disease, but now the words of Jesus invade his heart and dispel the hopelessness. God is the one who commands light to shine in darkness. Faith enters when God commands light to shine in our hearts.

Then the Christian stretches out his hand and places it on the sick. He reaches out for a miracle, and then it happens. When the Christian reaches out, God also reaches out. God endorses his action. He turns the man's small effort into a miracle. Even when our feelings fluctuate, the word of God does not change, and we can still take action. If feelings of fear come, I can still reach out my hand. It is not ideal to have such feelings, but faith itself is not a feeling, and the word of God empowers me to act anyway, to break through the fear, and to reach for that miracle.

Put your faith into action. Are there feelings of fear? Are there feelings of defeat? The Faithless love to teach that such feelings are natural, and that you should be honest about them, even embrace them. This is theological projection. They are faithless, weak, perhaps even reprobate, and they are eager to convince you that their condition is acceptable. They want you to agree that people like them are spiritual, honest, even heroic.

Obviously, I disagree that feelings of fear, doubt, and despair are acceptable. But your feelings should not stop you from taking action. You still have your will. You can decide to act. You can act whether you are feeling confident or fearful. You can act whether you are feeling excited or worried. You can walk toward your destination whether you are feeling optimistic or discouraged. Nevertheless, courage will make more effective use of your action. Indeed, God is not pleased with fear, but when you take what faith you have and take action, God can still make a miracle out of it.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news. The good news is that God has come to save you, and there is hope in every situation. If you have hope that you will succeed because of what you have learned from the word of God, then you have faith regardless of what you are feeling at this moment. You do not have faith just because you feel good about yourself. And if your feelings fluctuate, it does not mean that you have no faith.

Again, it is popular for religious people to say that it is natural to feel fear and worry, and that this is something we should embrace. They claim that God is compassionate and that God understands we are only human. However, Jesus rebuked fear and worry in his disciples even in the face of death. God is compassionate, and that is why he infuses us with faith to deliver us from the torture of fear and worry. God understands that we are human, and that is why he infuses us with his Spirit to make us more than human. We ought to reach a place where there is only faith, and no fear and worry.

So I do not excuse unbelief, but I am pointing out the way of faith by moving forward. What I mean is that even before we reach that place of perfect peace and unmovable confidence, we

can act according to the promise of God, and as we act, God will act. And when God acts, miracles happen.

As you continue to grow in faith, your feelings will become consistent. They will agree with your faith. Fluctuations will decrease. You will not go up and down. Circumstances will not control you. They will not influence whether you are happy or depressed. Stability is the natural consequence of faith.

Meanwhile, even when your feelings seem to be against you, there is no need to become helpless and lost. You have been educated by the word of God. You know the correct course of action regardless of what you feel. The more faith and courage you possess, the less your feelings can hinder you. But start with what faith and courage you have. If you have faith like a seed, you can move a mountain. If you have some courage, you can do something. You can move toward victory.

Confidence in God will produce confidence about yourself. As Caleb said, "Let us go up at once and occupy the land, for we are well able to overcome it." He did not say, "God is able to overcome." Of course he could have said that, but it was because God was able that Caleb said, "We are able." The Faithless cannot accept this. To them, any form of self-confidence is wrong. They think that self-esteem is arrogance and implies a sense of independence from God. But we have confidence about what we can do because we have confidence in what God can do.

Faith is the beginning of action. Faith is the foundation of progress. Faith is the proof of leadership. Take action. Do something to solve that problem. Do something to take what you want. Seize it with action. Listen to God. Then do something. Think about God's attributes and promises and how they relate to your goals. Then do what it takes to get what you want. Do something to get that better job. Do something to improve your health. Do something to restore your marriage. Do something to spread the gospel.

Remind yourself that the God of the Bible blesses his people with success and happiness. Remind yourself that the God of the Bible delights in performing miracles and wonders. Then ask for that miracle. Lay hands on that sick person. Teach him again, and pray again. Never give up. Refuse to allow the Faithless to convince you. If you want something, take it. Put your faith into action. Chase after it. God will multiply your efforts.

Declare your faith by your action. Declare that there is hope. Declare that the impossible can become possible. God will give you success. You are a Christian. You are a follower of Jesus Christ. When you grow, the kingdom of God grows. When you prosper, the church of Christ prospers. Your success is part of God's plan. Your healing aligns with God's program. Your happiness glorifies the name of Jesus.

I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I have a contract with God. There is always something I can do. Even if I stumble toward my goal, God will walk with me and cause the earth to tremble. God will teach me. He will hold me up. Then I will stand straight and walk. Then I will run. I can reach

for what I want. I can find the solution. I can overcome the disease. I can make my life better. I can, because God can. I can take what belongs to me as a child of God. It is never a dead end. I have a future and a hope. I will count on God to give me success and victory. Do not wallow in hopelessness. Do not remain in defeat. Do something. Say something. Pray something. Reach for that miracle.

Seek God Through His Blessings

Christians are besieged by the faithless teachings of religious men, accepting them without thinking, without discerning the obvious poison within them. One of the most insidious of these teachings is the notion that we should not seek blessings from God, but instead seek God himself. It sounds pious, but it is a contradiction, an absurdity that distorts the nature of the relationship God desires with his people.

They make it seem like there is a categorical difference between seeking blessings from God and seeking God himself. But is there truly such a difference? Or has this distinction been fabricated or exaggerated by men who have neither the courage nor the faith to approach God on his own terms?

Suppose we assume a clear distinction and say that seeking blessings from God is not to seek God at all. Suppose asking God for things is not to honor and worship him. Then let me ask: would it be acceptable to seek a blessing from the devil, since by this logic it would not mean that one is seeking the devil at all? What if you seek God, but pray to the devil? Would you remain clean and innocent? No religious person would agree with this. The suggestion would provoke alarm and clarity. Everyone would recognize that to seek anything from the devil is to seek the devil himself, and even to love him and to admire him. To seek help and success from the devil is to submit to him, to align with him, and to embrace him and what he represents. Praying to the devil for a blessing is devil worship. And it is no better to seek "just a little" from the devil. To consider the option at all is already a sign of a corrupt heart.

Why would this logic suddenly fall apart when it comes to God? Why do people so readily accept that seeking something from God, such as healing, success, and supernatural gifts and powers, is somehow inferior spirituality, if not outright corrupt or wrong? It is because when they think about God, a religious veil covers their hearts, confounding their thoughts and preventing them from seeing clearly. This veil is woven from the fabric of human tradition and false piety. In faithless religion, there is a fundamental estrangement from God, a deep suspicion of him, and an aversion to faith and positive expectations. It teaches people that to want anything from God is unholy, that to desire his blessings is selfish and immature.

The Bible teaches the opposite. Jacob wrestled with God and said, "I will not let you go until you bless me." So God blessed him, and called him Israel, meaning "a prince with God." Jacob's tenacity, his refusal to let go until he received God's blessing, was counted as faith. This persistence brought him into a deeper relationship with God. Jacob did not separate God from his blessing, but he understood that to seek the blessing of God was to seek God himself.

Consider Jabez, who prayed, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." He said, "Give me success! Prevent any suffering!" He wanted prosperity from God, and God granted his request. There was not even a hint of disapproval. Jabez did not separate God from the blessings he desired. He recognized that true prosperity comes from God's hand and sought it boldly.

It is not humility to supposedly seek God but downplay his blessings. That is just arrogance masquerading as holiness. It is the attitude of a stuck-up piece of garbage, too proud to admit needs and desires, too self-righteous to relate to God on this level. It betrays a lack of spiritual aptitude to think that one can truly seek God without also desiring what God wants to give. Someone like this is like a child who says he wants his father's presence but dismisses his father's gifts, boasting that this makes him more virtuous. In reality, this is the ungrateful self-righteous attitude of a stuck-up brat. He insults and dishonors his father while imagining that the father prefers it this way. He thinks that he is the best son, when the truth is that there is but a hollow appearance of a relationship. Yet this depicts most of Christendom.

To seek blessings from the devil is to seek the devil. It is to honor and worship the devil. But is seeking blessings from God the same as seeking the devil? If not, then what is it? Is it not to seek God? To seek blessings from the world is to be worldly. But somehow, religious hypocrites want us to believe that to seek blessings from God is still worldly, that to seek his gifts is selfish, that to desire his healing, his prosperity, his power represents a low level of piety, or even impiety. It is utterly idiotic. But this is the thinking that passes for orthodoxy and spirituality in the wasteland of human tradition. Those admired as the best of the theologians think this way. Faithless incompetent stuck-up trash.

People who become religious, yet have no faith or reason, always end up negative and stupid. They embrace a false holiness and false humility. They separate God from his blessings, and in doing so, separate themselves from God. Their faithless religion destroys their minds, and they become fanatical morons. It is as if they say, "I will seek God, but I am too good to seek his blessings. If he wants to give them to me, perhaps I will accept them, but I will not expect them." This is arrogance wrapped in religious pretense. They are left with nothing but a religious farce.

True religion, true faith, has the courage and humility to seek good things from God, and to boldly approach the throne of grace, expecting to receive what God has promised. God himself invites us to ask, to seek, to knock. Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." He did not say, "Ask only for spiritual things" or "Seek only my presence but not my gifts." No, he said to ask, to seek, to knock, and to come to God with our desires, trusting in his goodness. Consider the kinds of miracles Jesus performed: healing the sick, feeding thousands of people, stopping storms, raising the dead. These miracles illustrate the kinds of things Jesus included when he told us to ask.

God is a generous Father who delights in giving good gifts to his children. Jesus said so. Do not worry that it might be wrong or selfish to seek blessings from God. Do not allow dead religion to intimidate you. Seek God, and seek everything that has to do with God. Seek his gifts, his blessings, his healing, his prosperity. Seek his power, his presence, his goodness. Seek his wisdom, his holiness, his grace. Take it all. God will fellowship with you around his gifts. He will make your prayers and desires the context in which he teaches you about himself. As you seek

his blessings, you will find him. As you desire his gifts, you will discover his heart. The blessings are not separate from God. They are an expression of himself.

Stronger with Age

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103:2-5)

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:30-31)

Most people consider aging an unavoidable journey into weakness and decline. They resign themselves to the idea that, with each passing year, the human body must inevitably grow frail, and that vigor must give way to sickness and decay. This view is grounded in the expectation that we live under the law of sin and death, an unavoidable consequence of the fall of man. However, Scripture presents a different reality for those who are in Christ. Believers are not meant to live under the same set of rules as the rest of the world. They are not subject to the natural course dictated by sin and death. Instead, they are able to live by the power of God through faith, which changes the very nature of how they age.

The law of sin and death binds humanity to the inevitability of sickness and decline, a fate wrought by Adam's disobedience. As the Bible says, "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men." But those who belong to Christ have been set free from this law and have entered into a new reality. As the Bible also says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." Christians no longer have to live according to the principles that govern the fallen world. They are no longer bound by the inevitability of decay that sin imposes, and death means something different to them. They live by a different set of rules – the laws of faith, power, and life in Christ.

Because this is true, then age should not make a difference for those who live by the Spirit of God. Since God gives and sustains life, and since his Spirit infuses our beings, then the passing of time should not mean the deterioration of strength. On the contrary, it should mean that divine power and energy permeate our bodies more and more. Instead of conforming to the expectation of decline, those who have faith can experience an increasing measure of God's strength, growing stronger as the years advance.

Caleb serves as an example. At the age of eighty-five, he declared, "I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out. I am just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then." Caleb did not conform to the expectation that age must bring weakness. Instead, he lived by faith in God, and his strength remained undiminished. Even in his old age, he was ready to take the mountain that God had promised. Remarkably, he achieved this under a religion of types and shadows, before the reality arrived in Jesus Christ. Even a religion that merely anticipated Christ enabled Caleb to live without sickness and decline. How much more should we who live in the

reality of Jesus Christ and who are infused with the Spirit of God grow stronger with age, shedding even the weaknesses and diseases that we might have had when we were young! Caleb's story stands as a testimony to what it means to live by a different set of rules, not undergoing the natural decay that comes from sin, but growing stronger by the supernatural power that comes from faith in God's word.

This perspective requires a reorientation of the way most people think about aging. The world tells us that aging is synonymous with decline. It is a descent into irrelevance and impotence, a process that ends in death through sickness. This is indeed true when we refer to those who live without God and without faith. But the gospel of Jesus Christ offers a different path. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, but the Bible says, "His eyes were not dimmed, and his strength was not diminished." He was sustained by the presence of God, so that his body defied the laws of sickness and decline. The same is true of Abraham and Sarah. By the power of God, they received physical health and renewal to conceive a child long after it was assumed to be impossible.

For those who had faith in God, it was never necessary for sickness and decline to come with age even before the coming of Jesus Christ. How much more should Christians live with increasing health and energy now that Jesus has taken our infirmities and carried our sicknesses, and that the Spirit of God has infused us with divine life and power. This is a present reality for us. The power that sustained Moses, the strength that kept Caleb ready for battle, the vitality that enabled Abraham and Sarah to receive their promise, that power is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead and who now dwells in us. As the Bible says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you." It is true that we will be raised to life in the resurrection, but the Holy Spirit who would make that happen is already living in us. The life of faith entails not only a spiritual awakening, but also physical quickening. It is a life infused with resurrection power in every part of our being.

The Christian's perspective on aging should be fundamentally different from that of the world and that of faithless religion. Instead of expecting to grow weaker, we should expect to grow stronger. Instead of looking at each passing year as a step closer to frailty, we should see it as an opportunity for God's power to be more fully displayed in us. Our strength does not depend on the flesh, but on the inexhaustible power of God. Each year that passes should find us more vigorous in faith, more resolute in spirit, and physically enhanced by the supernatural power of Jesus Christ, who conquered sin, sickness, and death.

For the followers of Jesus Christ, aging should be a process into deeper dependence on God, and a walk into an increasing manifestation of his supernatural power. We are not governed by the law of sin and death, but by the law of spirit and life. Like Caleb, we can be ready to take on new mountains regardless of our age, because the God who promised is faithful, and the effects of his power within us can increase with time. The world and faithless religion live under the expectation of decline, but faith enables us to live by a different set of rules. As we walk in faith, God's power will not only increasingly renew and strengthen us, but it will also overflow

more and more from us to others, resulting in an increasingly spectacular ministry of signs and wonders, and a ministry of healing and prophecy.

The Answer to All Your Problems

Preaching that God is the source of all your problems is not preaching the gospel. Preaching that following Jesus will multiply your problems is not preaching the gospel. Preaching that you have to work and suffer for God, but that God will not solve your problems is not preaching the gospel.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of salvation and deliverance. It is the declaration that God will save our souls and solve our problems. The Faithless condemn this message. They claim it is dangerous to acknowledge that God will solve our problems because it is an unspiritual message, and it may produce false hope and attract false converts. Of course, they think it may produce false hope because they do not have faith in God. Once I heard a preacher exclaim, "God is not here to solve your problems!" He seemed strangely happy about it. He was very mainstream, very orthodox, very respected. And he was very demonic. This kind of religion is faithless fanaticism.

If God is not here to solve my problems, then who is? Do I have to help myself, save myself? Is that the gospel? Or do faithless people speak this way because there is actually no God in the religion they preach? Even the message that God will forgive all our sins would bring in a good number of false converts, so should we stop preaching that too?

Faithless fanatics speak as if the true gospel is the message that God condemns you more severely if you follow Jesus, and that the more you devote yourself to Christ, the more you will suffer sickness, poverty, and guilt, as if the true gospel is that God will increase your suffering and make your life more unbearable. And then, if someone still chooses to follow Jesus after hearing such a message, that person must be a true believer! This is insanity. Such people are not demonstrating faith, but a grotesque fetish for suffering. This is not Christianity. It is masochism disguised as holiness.

Jesus Christ did not preach such a gospel. He proclaimed the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from oppression. He emphasized the lightness of his yoke, and presented it as a contrast against false religion. He healed the sick freely, demonstrating that God cares about the well-being of his people. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you." The "things" he referred to were the very items that the pagans were seeking, such as food, clothing, and money. Jesus preached that faith leads to prosperity. God would make mammon itself serve us. Can faithless people teach us about Jesus better than Jesus himself?

Indeed, Jesus taught the proper priorities. He said that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, and that it is foolish for a person to gain the whole world but lose his soul. However, the contrast he made was between seeking blessings from God and seeking them from mammon. If a man worships mammon to gain the things of this world, he will indeed lose his soul. But this is not true of someone who seeks God and trusts him for what he desires in life. Just because life does not consist in possessions does not mean we must have zero

possessions. Just because a person could gain the whole world but lose his soul does not mean he would gain his soul by losing the whole world! But this is how stupid faithless people are. They think they are smart and accurate, but they are not. They make the most basic logical errors in their doctrines, yet they remain smug about the things they say.

Jesus said that if you follow him, you will gain more of everything. Along with the blessings you gain, he warned that there would also be persecution. This is the kind of suffering that could increase, not sickness, poverty, depression, and such things. Persecution could increase because many do not follow him. They do not want you to obtain the blessings of God, or they do not want these blessings to be associated with the God that they claim to worship. So when you agree with Jesus, and when you begin to receive these things by faith, they become angry. They become angry just like their spiritual ancestors became angry when Jesus went around preaching the truth and healing the sick. This is why they would persecute you just like their spiritual ancestors persecuted and murdered Jesus.

God is the answer to all our problems. He heals, he prospers, and he blesses. Faithless religious people, however, are perverted and grotesque. They think that if you follow Christ despite believing he will do nothing for you or that he will increase your suffering, then your faith must be pure. But that is not the gospel. True faith believes the best about God, because God is good. Your faith is strong and true when you believe that God is good, and that it means he will rescue you and bless you. The false idea we must avoid is not that God will care for us, but the idea that everyone else will be happy that we follow Jesus. Our problems will not come from God. They will come from other people. They will come from Satan. God is the answer to our problems, not the source of our problems.

Preaching God as the problem instead of the answer will not produce true converts. In fact, it will be the very message that gets us false converts. Jesus said that his sheep will hear his voice, and the voice of another they will not follow. The gospel of masochism is not the voice of Jesus. This is why in mainstream or traditional churches -- the most historic and orthodox ones -- there are so many faithless, lifeless, powerless church members. They are false converts. Then some of them become preachers, and warn everyone about a gospel that is actually good news! The preachers are also false converts.

Faithless doctrines suggest that our problems are either never solved in this life or that we must solve them ourselves. They claim it is a false gospel to say that God will surely help us, that he will heal us, or that he will prosper us. This line of thinking is anti-Christ, for Jesus devoted his ministry to solving people's problems. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and delivered the oppressed. If we are to preach Christ, we must preach the same message of hope and deliverance.

Will this kind of preaching attract the wrong people? Will preaching the truth, that God is the answer to all our problems, attract false converts? Of course it will, but this is a red herring. You can say anything about God, and it will attract false converts. You can say that God will forgive, and this will attract false converts who want forgiveness, but who do not truly believe. You can

say that God will judge, and this will attract false converts, since some people will pretend to follow him out of fear. You can say that God will heal your bodies or that God will make you sick, and either message will attract some false converts for different reasons. You can say that God will make you rich or that God will make you poor, and either one will attract some false converts. You can say God will do nothing, and it will attract false converts. Anything that you say, true or false, will attract some followers.

We must decide what to preach based on what God says, based on what is true, and not based on whether we will attract false converts. This should be obvious, but it is unfathomable to people who have no faith and intelligence. If I preach the truth, and people believe it, then they are true converts. If I preach the truth, and people pretend to believe it even though they do not, then they are false converts. But I should not preach a lie just so these people would stay away!

If you preach the true gospel, it is possible to attract fewer false converts, and it would not be your fault even when there are some false converts. It would be their fault. You will weed out some of these false converts by a persistent ministry of teaching the whole truth about God and the Christian faith, by holding out God's standard, and by challenging people to live according to the truth.

The most pleasant and powerful message, when it is the truth, is not necessarily the one that everybody will like. Faithless people regard good news with cynicism, even anger and resentment. A message of suffering will not necessarily hinder people from coming, because many people want to be religious, and they imagine that suffering is what it means to be religious. The correct approach is to preach the truth regardless, and expect the Holy Spirit to awaken the chosen ones and to harden the reprobates. Indeed, many of those who oppose the message of good news are false converts. They love a message of bad news, a message of suffering and deprivation, because it makes them feel pious. They will suffer in this life as they wish, and after that they will burn in hell.

The Conspiracy of Suffering

There is a widespread religious conspiracy that suffering is inherent to the gospel. Many people believe that pain and defeat, sickness and poverty, are inextricable parts of the Christian life, and that embracing these things is proof of devotion. This is a perversion of the gospel. While suffering may be present because of opposition from those who reject God, it is incorrect to assume that the gospel itself requires suffering. In fact, it possesses the power to deliver us from suffering, and it proclaims victory over all opposition.

Suffering exists because of those who reject God. When people oppose God's authority and seek their own ways, they create environments of chaos and corruption. But if you are in a community where everyone acknowledges and submits to God, such suffering would not be a part of your experience. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a gospel of misery but a gospel of deliverance from every curse that comes from rebellion against God.

The gospel is proclaimed as a message of triumph, not as an invitation to embrace defeat. It is a message of salvation and healing, not of sickness and despair. If you think suffering is inherent to the gospel, you will be unable to handle prosperity. When you experience comfort, you will feel compelled to alter the gospel to accommodate your situation. You may begin to interpret all suffering, even that which results from your own sin or unbelief, as something good and holy, even a gift from God, and you will accept poverty and sickness as part of his plan. Such thinking leads to unfaithful stewardship of God's grace.

Consider the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt. At first, their suffering came from the Egyptians who oppressed them. The Israelites were slaves, subjected to harsh labor and brutal treatment. But once God delivered them, their former oppressors could no longer inflict suffering upon them. After the Exodus, the only suffering they experienced was due to their own lack of faith in God, their unwillingness to trust him to overcome the problems in their new environment, like the scarcity of water or food. Instead of trusting God, they complained and doubted his intentions. They went so far as to say that God had brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness.

This attitude angered God. It was faithless, and it grossly distorted his character and purpose. They began to craft a theology that justified their suffering, claiming that it was God's will for them to endure such hardships. In a similar way, faithless religion tries to justify suffering by assigning it to God, pretending it is a mark of holiness to endure sickness and poverty. Once exposed, this kind of thinking is plainly absurd. It portrays God as cruel and heartless, as if he breaks his promises and takes pleasure in watching his people suffer.

The Bible presents a very different picture of God and his intentions for his people. Take the story of Abraham, for example. Abraham put God first in everything, but this did not mean that God withheld blessings from him. God gave him Isaac, the child of promise. Even when Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac, he believed the promise so completely that he trusted God to raise Isaac from the dead. The Bible says Abraham "reasoned that God could even raise

the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death." His faith was in the promise of God, and by believing, he received both Isaac and the blessings God had promised through him. God presented the gospel to Abraham as a promise of healing, prosperity, and greatness, and Abraham's faith was a complete trust in God's word. He believed in God's ability to fulfill his promise, even if it required a resurrection. This is the true heart of those who believe in the gospel of healing and prosperity. It is not a heart of greed and carnality, but a willingness to put God first, coupled with an unshakeable trust in his power to fulfill his promises.

Faithless people who preach a gospel of sickness and poverty oppose this foundation of the Christian faith. They are not promoting humility or devotion. They are denying the power of God's word. The Faithless are proud of being poor and sick, believing that their suffering makes them more righteous, or that it is unavoidable in this sinful world, or even that it is a gift from God. One of the greatest religious lies is that we ought to settle for sickness and poverty and suffering. God does not instruct his people to embrace such conditions. He desires to bless his people so that they can enjoy his goodness and also become a blessing to others.

Settling for sickness and poverty is not Christian doctrine, but it is an affront to the nature of God and the gospel. Christians must be reminded of this truth, because the lie that suffering is necessary or holy is rampant. Faithlessness is natural for sinners, and many within religious circles are, in fact, unbelievers. It is unnatural for the unregenerate heart to have faith, to believe that God provides for his children and fulfills their desires according to their faith. They do not believe in God, and so it is natural for them to reject his promises and settle for less.

Sickness and poverty are not only undesirable, but they also destroy effectiveness. A person who is constantly struggling to survive is too preoccupied to be useful in advancing the gospel or helping others. He is too busy trying to make ends meet to care about expanding the kingdom of God. Imagine how much more effective a healthy, prosperous believer could be. He is someone who has the resources and the energy to focus on the needs of others and the advancement of God's purposes. But if you are too proud of your suffering, you will never care to find out how much more effective you could be for God's kingdom.

God's intention has always been to deliver his people from oppression and to bless them abundantly. In Deuteronomy 28, God lays out the blessings for obedience: prosperity, health, protection, and abundance. God even boasted that he would be the one to give them "power to get wealth." These blessings are for each individual and are also meant to overflow into the community, allowing God's people to be a light to the nations. The curse, on the other hand, includes sickness, poverty, and defeat, the very things many Christians have come to accept as God's will for them.

Jesus came to reverse the curse and to bring the blessings of Abraham to all who believe. As Paul said, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus." Jesus did not endure the cross so that we could continue to live under the curse.

He came so that we could inherit the blessings of Abraham, blessings of prosperity, health, victory, and above all, the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and delivered the oppressed during his ministry. He was demonstrating the nature of the kingdom of God, a kingdom without lack, without sickness, and without oppression. When Jesus sent out his disciples, he commanded them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. They were not merely signs to authenticate the message – they were the message. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of power, and the gospel is a gospel of blessing and deliverance.

Paul understood this. He said, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." The gospel can triumph in every intellectual debate, but it can also triumph in every other kind of confrontation: spiritual, financial, medical, and beyond. It produces noticeable benefits and effects, even miracles. These are not merely signs pointing to the kingdom -- they are the kingdom. Paul said that it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

The gospel of suffering is a counterfeit gospel. Those who preach this gospel align themselves with the faithless generation of Israelites who grumbled against God in the wilderness. They are like the ten spies who saw the giants in the land and declared that it was impossible to take possession of God's promise. But Christians ought to be like Caleb and Joshua, who saw the same giants but believed that God had given them the land.

Never boast about your suffering. Boast about the God who delivers us from suffering and empowers us to live in constant victory. Refuse to become worthless and unfaithful stewards of the gospel by worshiping the idols of sickness and poverty. Rather, believe in the power of God to deliver us from these things and to bless us abundantly. Proclaim the gospel of power, victory, and miracles to a world that desperately needs it. The gospel is supernatural and unstoppable. Miracles often occur on their own even as we preach it. This kind of gospel ministry is what will advance his kingdom and fulfill the Great Commission.

The Father Himself Loves You

Jesus said to his disciples, "In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."

At that time, the Jewish view of God often emphasized his holiness and transcendence in such a way that made him seem distant and unapproachable. The people went to God through rituals, sacrifices, and the mediation of priests. Access to God was restricted, and the idea of coming to God personally and intimately was foreign to most people. The temple system, with its barriers and divisions, reinforced the idea that God was separated from the common person.

Jesus brought a revolutionary message. He presented God as one who desires a close and personal relationship with his people. He taught his disciples to address God as "Father," a radical departure from the formal and distant ways that they were accustomed to. By teaching his disciples to pray in his name, Jesus gave them direct access to the Father, bypassing the system of sacrifices and intermediaries. This marked a profound shift in how people could relate to God.

The idea of praying in the name of Jesus and knowing that the Father himself loves us was life-changing for the disciples. They had approached God with distance and formality, relying on priests and rituals. But Jesus introduced a new way, a relationship characterized by intimacy and confidence. God was no longer seen as a remote deity to be appeased, but as a loving Father who delights in his children and desires to bless them.

Building on this new understanding of God as a loving Father, Jesus taught his disciples to pray in his name. The name of Jesus is not a mere phrase to end a prayer, but a representation of all he accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection. He lived in perfect obedience to the Father, fulfilled all righteousness, and offered himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin. Because of this, God has highly exalted him and given him the name above every name. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we are invoking the authority and righteousness of the one who has been given all power in heaven and on earth.

Praying in the name of Jesus means that we approach God not based on our own merit, but on the merit of Jesus Christ. Our sins and failures would have disqualified us from coming before a holy God, but the sacrifice of Jesus has opened the way for us to enter his presence. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we affirm that we are accepted by God because of him, not because of anything we have done. This is why we can come before God with boldness and confidence, even when our feelings shift. The Father loves Jesus, and when we come in his name, we carry the full weight of his righteousness.

Moreover, the name of Jesus represents his role as our mediator. Scripture tells us that there is one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus. This role of mediator is a key reason why we can confidently approach God. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we

acknowledge that he is the bridge between us and the Father. He is the one who has reconciled us to God, and it is through him that we have access to the Father. We can approach the throne of grace because of his finished work. His mediation guarantees that our prayers are heard and that we are welcomed into the presence of a holy God.

Nevertheless, there is something we need to clarify. When we think about praying in the name of Jesus, we might assume that God answers us because of Jesus alone, that he cares deeply about Jesus and his obedience, but cares little for us as individuals, especially since we have sinned and failed. It is true that God answers us for Jesus' sake. But this is not the full picture. Jesus explained that the Father does not merely tolerate us for Jesus' sake while remaining distant or indifferent. But he declared that the Father himself loves us.

God loves Jesus, and this is why the name of Jesus carries such weight when we pray. But God also loves you as a distinct individual. The Father loves you, not merely because Jesus asked him to or because you use Jesus' name, but because he has chosen to set his love upon you. Jesus said, "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you." He made it clear that God does not need to be persuaded to bless you. The Father himself loves you, and that is why he will answer you.

Yet God has given you the name of Jesus as the basis by which to approach him. Although God loves you, you have sinned, and sin separates humanity from God. His holiness and righteousness demand that sin be judged, and it is through the work of Jesus on the cross that this separation is removed. By his death and resurrection, Jesus opened the way for sinners to approach a holy God. Therefore, you can come before God, even as someone who has sinned, even when you have failed, and pray in the name of Jesus. And God will receive you, not reluctantly but gladly, because of what Jesus has done.

This truth remains even when you feel weak, and even when your self-perception before God wavers. God's love for you is not based on your performance, but on his sovereign decision, his unchanging character, and the work of Jesus. You should never waver, but even if you struggle to believe that God loves you or that he would answer your prayers, you can still cling to this: God always answers Jesus.

It is easy to believe that God loves Jesus, and easy to believe that God will always answer him. You can apply this same confidence to yourself, because Jesus has given you the right to use his name. The same love God has for Jesus, and the same eagerness he has to answer him, now applies to you. It is as if you say to God, "The Son you love, I am with him. I belong to him." You can approach God with confidence, knowing he will answer you because of Jesus.

But still, Jesus wants you to go further. He wants you to know that the Father himself loves you individually and personally. It was the Father who sent Jesus to save you. It was his love that initiated your salvation and made a way for you to come to him. Jesus said, "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you." He wanted you to

understand that the Father's love for you is so specific and sufficient that he does not need anyone to convince him to bless you.

The Father himself loves you, and he will give to you simply because it is you who ask. This is a direct and personal love. It was this love that established the mediation of Jesus. It was this love that sent his Son to die for you, so that you could come home to him. And as Paul said, if God did not spare his own Son, how will he not also give you all things?

The God of Many Chances

It is commonly said that a person "deserves" a second chance. Even Christians often speak like this, adopting the language of entitlement. The idea is unbiblical and misleading. To claim that a person deserves a second chance is to say that a second chance is owed to him. Deserving implies a debt, as though someone is under obligation to provide it. If you deserve a second chance, then who owes it to you, and on what basis? And what makes you think that you deserve even a first chance?

Nobody deserves a second chance, and nobody deserves a first chance. Sinners are creatures fallen into wickedness and corruption, entirely without merit before God. On the other hand, Christians are the righteousness of God, but this righteousness is a gift. All that we have, all that we are, and all that we will ever receive comes because of God's grace alone, not because of any worth inherent within us. If we are to receive a single opportunity to follow him, let alone a lifetime of renewed chances, it will be through his grace alone, made available only through Jesus Christ. And then you will have many chances in Christ, not because you deserve them, but because God gives freely from his mercy.

The language of entitlement is a trap. If we grant second chances when they are deserved, then we should withhold mercy from everyone, because nobody truly qualifies. To act based on merit would mean to judge ourselves by a standard that none of us can meet. If we are to act based on a standard of entitlement, then we are all condemned, because no chance is owed to us. But if we operate by grace, then there is indeed hope. For it is grace that opens the door to a lifetime of new beginnings, to repentance and renewal in Christ. We must abandon this language of entitlement and instead speak the language of grace. We should say, "Let us give him another chance," not because he deserves it, but because God has freely shown grace to us. And by that same grace, we are called to show mercy to others.

Take the words of Jesus when Peter asked, "How many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus replied, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven." Certainly, this is teaching us to learn from the way God forgives. He is saying that God himself forgives us not once, not twice, but repeatedly and endlessly, as long as we come to him in repentance and faith through Jesus Christ.

The language of entitlement falls far short of this. Even those who say a person deserves a second chance would not say he deserves a hundred, a thousand, or a hundred thousand chances. Sooner or later, they would say that this person deserves no more chances. But no one truly deserves even the first and second chances. Does anyone deserve ten chances from God, or a hundred, as though he has accumulated some moral or spiritual debt from him? Such a notion is absurd and blasphemous.

However, we need that many chances. And it is in Christ that we have a lifetime of opportunities, not because we deserve them, but because he wills it. God forgives and restores us many times over. He is like the father who waits for his prodigal son to return, not because

the son has merited forgiveness, but because the father loves his son and delights to show mercy. God keeps us in Christ by his grace. He upholds us, granting us chance after chance to grow, to repent, to be healed, and to become more like him. Jesus Christ himself is our chance, our salvation, and our fellowship with God.

If you believe that you deserve a second chance, then you have misunderstood both your own condition and the mercy of God. Grace is a gift, not a payment or reward. A gift is not demanded as with a payment. It is received with gratitude and humility. To approach God with a sense of entitlement is to approach him with pride and self-righteousness, which he condemns. As the Bible says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." To the man who believes he is owed nothing, God grants everything. To the man who believes he deserves God's gifts and opportunities, he receives only the judgment his arrogance warrants.

Sinners want to view grace as a right rather than a gift. We see this in the way people speak of deserving second chances, new beginnings, or better circumstances. But God, and most of the time even other people, owe them nothing. In fact, if we were to tally what is owed to them, we would be obligated to make their situation worse. Entitlement leads to bitterness and frustration, because it is based on a lie. The idea of "deserving" something from God or anyone else is a form of pride that blinds us to our true state. Scripture teaches that our righteousness is as filthy rags before a holy God. None of us can earn his favor, but he has offered it freely through Jesus. If we approach him on the basis of grace, he will provide far more than a second chance. He will give us salvation, along with countless opportunities to grow, to repent, to receive healing and prosperity, and to be conformed to the image of his Son.

In Christ, we have not only a second chance, but the promise of continual renewal and restoration. He is the good shepherd who does not abandon his sheep. He is the vine, and we are the branches. Apart from him, we can do nothing, but in him, we bear much fruit. As long as you walk with Christ, you shall never fall beyond recovery. Jesus is your chance. He is your opportunity to receive God's unending grace and mercy. He promises that he will never leave you and never forsake you. In Christ, grace overflows. Through him, we have countless opportunities to start anew, not because we deserve any of these chances, but because God is good. As we come to understand this, we will also offer this same grace to others, not because they deserve it, but because we have been recipients of a grace beyond measure.

The Gospel of Improvement

The non-Christian world has seized the roles of motivational speakers and self-help teachers. These positions should belong to Christians, because the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only message of true empowerment. It is the only one that is based on truth, backed by the power of God, and anchored in his promises. Thus it is a tragedy that the very roles meant to offer strength and renewal have been surrendered to those who care nothing for the truth and the power of God.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the original and the true motivational message. Christians ought to be the only ones with a philosophy of optimism and confidence. However, they have turned negative and defeatist in their preaching, because they have been faithless, they have stupidly associated pain with piety. Their message has become one of self-harm and self-condemnation. This catastrophic failure has allowed the world to steal the mantle of positive thinking, filling the void with human counterfeits and alternatives.

The positive message of the world is one that exalts the wisdom and virtue of man instead of the power and grace of God. The Faithless preach a negative message that emphasizes suffering and defeat. This is because there is actually no God in their religion, so that they cannot hope for anything better. Then, as a reaction against the positive and hopeful message of the world, the Faithless harden their stance to become even more pessimistic and unbelieving, equating this with being pious, realistic, and submissive to God, when it is in some ways even more blasphemous than the humanistic philosophies of the world.

The Christian answer to positive thinking should not be negative thinking. The Christian alternative to motivational talk is not defeatist and depressing talk. The Christian alternative to self-help is not self-harm and self-hatred. Faithless religious people have allowed the world to seize the positions that Christians ought to occupy, and then as a reaction, Christians destroy their own message for spite. What a bunch of morons. No wonder reprobates look down on Jesus, since they think that weak and stupid losers like these represent him. Of course, although we state the matter in such terms, the Christian message is not the alternative to anything. It is the first and only truth, and other views are counterfeits and false alternatives. But non-Christians have seized the leadership on positive thinking for so long that we now appear to be the ones reacting and suggesting alternatives.

Christians, stupidly imagining that they are true to orthodoxy and wise to resist imitation, throw out the positive and triumphant essence of the gospel, all in an effort to distance themselves from the counterfeits. But in doing so, they fail to provide the original message that the world desperately needs. This is one of the greatest deceptions that the devil has ever orchestrated. He has managed to convince the church that, because the world has counterfeited certain elements of the gospel, we must reject these elements altogether. Instead of seeing the power of God to uplift and empower, the Faithless have banned the truth that belonged to us since the beginning. This does not reduce the world's influence. It only serves to increase it because the church, by withholding the good things of God, leaves a void that the world greedily fills

with alternatives that lead people further away from God. In fact, so-called Christians have been more guilty than others in humanity's drift from God. They had the treasure in their hands and they condemned it. They had Christ before them and they crucified him!

This pattern has repeated itself many times in history. The church would undermine the gospel through unbelief. Then, when the world stole principles from the gospel and repackaged them on a human basis, stripped of Christ and salvation, the church often responded in alarm by condemning those very principles. The Faithless made it sound like a brave stance for truth, but it was always a foolish retreat from the good news they should have preached. This has left the church impoverished, stripped of its distinctive message of faith and power. Meanwhile, the world has erected a beacon of hope by imitating the gospel, though it is hollow and leads to ruin. Still, it attracts those who yearn for breakthrough. While the world attracts people with its empty promises, the church erodes from within, losing what people it has, offering no real answer. Then the Faithless turn against the few Christians who preach faith and victory from Scripture, claiming that these people are imitating the world's message and drawing false converts!

It is most stupid to reject the positive elements of the gospel simply because the world has counterfeited them. The correct approach is to assert these truths with greater force and clarity, emphasizing them even more than the world does, and declare that true power and change can only come from God through Jesus Christ. The gospel is the original message of empowerment, saving and improving the whole person. It is when we follow Jesus that we can believe, be positive and confident. True personal power does not come from human potential, because the sinner is corrupt, sick, and dead in spirit. No, true power begins with the reborn spirit, awakened by the word of God and energized by the Spirit of God. The gospel brings the man of faith into a realm of belief and power that no worldly system can reach, because it far surpasses human potential. It teaches the believer to consciously access divine potential to obtain supernatural results. The gospel produces superhuman positive thinking.

Unlike the world's self-help philosophy, which in essence encourages sinners to lie to themselves in order to generate a degree of superficial effects, the gospel possesses divine power for genuine and lasting self-improvement. The gospel is not a bandage, but a cure. It is not a mask, but transfiguration. While many people who call themselves Christians might shrink from the idea of self-improvement, this stems from careless and faithless thinking. The gospel is certainly not about God-improvement, as if God himself needs to improve! If anyone is going to improve by the gospel, it is we ourselves.

The gospel does not teach self-esteem based on the assumption of inherent worth in man, but it does produce self-esteem, grounded in the worth that God has assigned to us by his grace through Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, you are not worthless. You are valuable because God has decided that you are valuable, and it would be false and sinful to disagree with him. This sense of self-worth is not inherent in us as human beings, but derived from the revelation of Jesus Christ. As Jesus said, we are nothing without him. But he also said that if we abide in him, and his words abide in us, we will ask what we decide, and it will be done for us. Without

him, we have no reason for confidence or worth. But if we follow Christ and keep his words in our hearts, we ought to possess a supernatural sense of worth and confidence, far beyond the self-delusion produced by the world's self-help message.

The world says, "Believe in yourself. You are worth it. You have unlimited potential." This is false. Sinners are worthless unless God gives them worth through Jesus Christ. Yet they are still made in the image of God. So even in sinners, whose spiritual and intellectual faculties have been fatally crippled, the false message can stir what little potential remains, making them more effective in life and work. However, it leads to deeper spiritual deception and corruption. It feeds their pride and hardens their hearts against God. Meanwhile, Christians have preached a false message of weakness and defeat, one that is not only unattractive to sinners but worse, blasphemous to the grace of God and the blood of Christ.

Jesus Christ has the real answer, the real truth. In him, we can say, "I was sinful and worthless. I had potential only for more evil and failure. But then I was born again by the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ saved me, changed me, and empowered me. Now I am the righteousness of God. I am a royal priesthood. This is the worth that God has assigned to me. I have unlimited potential through him, because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and he said that all things are possible for one who has faith."

Terms like "self-help" and "self-improvement" offend religious people, and for this reason I would like to keep using them. All of us ought to relish in torturing faithless religious people by using words that they hate to communicate truths that they hate about the God that they hate. As the Bible teaches, they see but cannot perceive, they hear but cannot understand, so that they cannot repent, and God would not heal or forgive them. This was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus, and it continues today. If people truly wish to hear and obey God, they would put aside their religious pride and listen even when we communicate using words that offend their human orthodoxy. By hardening themselves and being offended, they condemn themselves.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate "self-help" and "self-improvement" message. Certainly, we are not helping God or improving God, but ourselves. However, unlike the self-help and self-improvement of sinners, Christians do not help ourselves or improve ourselves by any power that is inherent in us. We reject any suggestion that we can save ourselves from sin and corruption, or that we can do anything meaningful to save our broken relationship with God. The gospel is the message that God has come to save us and restore our relationship with him through Jesus Christ. It is by this message that he helps us and improves us in ways that sinners can never hope to achieve by awakening their corrupt potential.

God produces supernatural and superhuman improvement in us. Beginning from the miracle of regeneration, the gospel is the message of ultimate improvement that transforms and empowers our very selves, and that is at the same time not human-centered but God-centered. God glorifies himself by saving and improving us through Jesus Christ. By this message, we become confident, intelligent, and purposeful, living faith-filled and meaningful lives, even supernatural lives.

We do not say, "God is a new creation in Christ Jesus. The old has passed away with God; behold, everything about God has become new!" That would be blasphemous. No, I am the one born again. I am the new creation. We do not say, "God is the righteousness of God in Christ." That would be absurd. No, I am the righteousness of God in Christ. The gospel helped myself. The gospel enhances me. You do not say, "God is the temple of the Holy Spirit." No, I am the temple of the Holy Spirit because of Jesus Christ. You do not say, "Greater is God who is in God, than he who is in the world." That would be nonsensical. No, greater is he who is in me, than he who is in the world. God is in me, in us. It is not self-centered to apply the gospel to myself, because the gospel is the means by which God saves me, not himself. The effects of the gospel are all about me. God himself never needed the gospel.

Unless I apply the gospel to myself, I do not apply it at all. And when I apply the gospel to myself -- this is something that God initiates in me by his grace -- I am helped and improved, and I become supernaturally optimistic. I become more positive about myself than sinners can achieve by their self-delusions, but this positive perception about myself is reality. This is where true self-esteem is found. My self-perception is greater than any delusion that I can create for myself, because it comes from an actual identification with Jesus Christ, who is seated in the highest place in heaven. I am the temple of God. I am full of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles. I am given this worth because I have become one with Jesus Christ.

We do not say, "God will cast out demons in the name of Jesus." No, I will cast out demons. Jesus has given me authority. I tell them what to do in the name of Jesus, not in my own name. To the extent that I think correctly about this, I have as much confidence in myself to cast out demons as I have in Jesus to cast them out, because it is done in his name. I am, so to speak, paying with his credit card. This is proper self-esteem, confidence based on what God is doing in me and through me. A person who understands this will not cower before the opinions of men or the powers of darkness. He knows who he is in Christ, and he knows the authority that has been entrusted to him. My attitude becomes as positive as how great I believe God is, not how great I am. Even the most delusional sinner might not think that he is as great as God. But my confidence can match my estimation of God, because all his resources are available to me through faith in Jesus Christ.

The teachings of self-harm and self-hatred in faithless theology are not the teachings of the Bible. They are not the teachings of Jesus. As the Bible says, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out." The people were suffering under faithless doctrines and human traditions, just like people are suffering these things today. Jesus did not come to push them down the cliff and finish them off, but he came to encourage and empower them. He called them to leave these faithless doctrines and human traditions. It was also why the religious people condemned his message and murdered him.

The Christ of Scripture is the victorious Lord who bestows supernatural and superhuman powers upon his people. Yet human orthodoxy presents believers still as suffering and defeated losers. This reflects their true opinion about Jesus. They have invented a false gospel, one that

encourages self-hatred and self-destructive thinking, and one that excuses their lack of faith. This is not orthodoxy according to biblical revelation, but orthodoxy according to the historic agreement of faithless losers, and it must be rejected.

For my own sake, I oppose such false teachings. I refuse to be destroyed by the lies that have bound so many in chains of weakness and false humility. I refuse to harm and condemn myself with faithless human doctrines that have killed countless people in their sickness and depression. And I also oppose it for the sake of others. They need the true gospel to liberate them from the shackles of their vain religious heritage, from the bondage of deceit that keeps them from walking in the fullness of what God has for them. Think for yourself. Will you suffer, will you be condemned and destroyed, so that you can vindicate faithless fantasies that other people have invented? Why would you harm yourself, and why would you blaspheme God, in order to fall in line with human religion?

The world has stolen much from the church, but it has taken only the shell of what is good. Would to God the world would take the whole gospel and be saved! But even the church does not believe the gospel. The world's imitation lacks true power. Even if it pushes human potential to its limit, it cannot attain superhuman results. And ultimately it leads to death and hell. Those who fail to uphold the optimism and triumph of the gospel are complicit in bringing people to destruction. Christians must return to the gospel, not the gospel of human potential, but the gospel of God's grace, the power of the reborn spirit, and the worth given to us by Jesus Christ. It is a message that should make everyone who believes it supernaturally competent, virtuous, and positive.

The Healing Word of God

Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction. They loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. (Psalm 107:17-20)

The people had become fools because of their sinful ways, bringing affliction upon themselves. Their sickness robbed them of all appetite, and their lives hung by a thread. It was a desperate scene, the result of iniquity pressing them to the edge of destruction. But in their distress, they cried out to the Lord.

God did not respond with more judgment or withdraw in apathy. He intervened with compassion. He sent his word, and it brought healing and deliverance. The people were in their predicament because of their foolishness, yet his response was one of mercy. His word did not stop at forgiveness, but it brought tangible healing and rescue from destruction. The word of God was powerful and effective, restoring both the spiritual and physical aspects of their lives.

God does not take pleasure in the misery of his people, and he does not send sickness as a mark of his favor. He did not use sickness to teach them. He sent his word for that purpose. Affliction came under his providence because they rejected that word. Deuteronomy contains repeated warnings that disobedience would bring curses upon the people, including sickness.

Their afflictions were not signs of deeper spirituality or greater obedience, but the result of rebellion against God's word. They did not suffer because they were especially devoted. They suffered because they had turned away from what God had spoken. Sickness was never a gift, never a good thing. And Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law. He has nullified the curse of sickness.

Even in their rebellion, the goodness of God remained clear. When they turned to him and cried out in their distress, he healed them. Their sickness was a physical condition, and the healing was a physical restoration. This was not a metaphor or a spiritual symbol. God's goodness appeared in the healing, not in the affliction. He teaches by his word, and when we listen, that word brings life and healing.

Those who embrace a false gospel of sickness transgress at precisely this point. They still refuse to listen. As the Bible says, "For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes, so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them." These people present themselves as humble and submissive to God's will, as if they are receiving his word with reverence. The opposite is true. They have hardened their hearts against the gospel and rejected the word of God. Otherwise, the Bible says, they would turn to God and he would heal them.

The word of God produces tangible, physical effects. It enhances every part of our lives. Scripture does not compartmentalize God's power, as if he reaches the soul but not the body, the spirit but not the circumstances. The word of God is for all of life, and brings results in every area. It heals the body just as it renews the mind and saves the soul. God's intention is wholeness, and his word is the means by which he brings it. His word is alive and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to penetrate and transform every aspect of life.

God's eagerness to heal the sick found its fullest expression in the ministry of Jesus. 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." His ministry was a demonstration of God's goodness. He did not go about making people sick to teach them spiritual lessons. He went about healing them. He destroyed sickness everywhere he went. To him, it was an oppression to be annihilated, not a blessing to be embraced. Sickness was condemned and expelled. Jesus was doing good by healing, and this was a manifestation of God's word and God's will.

If we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we must acknowledge that God's glory is not found in affliction. His glory is revealed in our repentance, our faith, our prayers for miracles, and his response to those prayers. God is glorified when his people turn to him in faith and he answers by delivering them. The Bible is filled with examples of God receiving glory through healing, deliverance, and miraculous provision, not through the prolonged suffering of his people.

In defiance to the clear teaching of Scripture, faithless religion declares that the glory of God is often found in our affliction and persistent suffering. This false theology exalts sickness and failure, as if God is most honored when he refuses to answer our prayers and leaves us in our pain. Such thinking is not only misguided but damnable, for it distorts the nature of God and denies the power of his word.

A theology that excuses failure and beautifies suffering is a theology that denies the goodness of God. It turns sickness into something to be embraced rather than something to be overcome. It turns unanswered prayer into a virtue rather than a call to persist in faith. Such a theology robs God of his glory by rejecting his power to heal and deliver. It must be condemned, because it is against the clear teaching of Scripture and the character of God.

God sent his word to heal, and he has never stopped doing so. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Jesus, the incarnate word of God, went about healing and delivering all who were oppressed by the devil. And now, the written word of God and the preached word of God continue that same work, bringing healing to those who receive it by faith. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It is a salvation that restores and enhances every aspect of our being.

The afflictions that people suffer are not signs of God's favor or evidence of deep spirituality. They are often the result of sin, unbelief, ignorance, faithless theology, or demonic oppression. Yet in his goodness, God has made a way of deliverance. He sent his word, and he sent his Son.

Jesus came to do good and to heal all who were oppressed, and he appointed his followers to carry on this ministry.

Reject any theology that glorifies suffering and failure. Refuse to accept sickness or poverty. Refuse failure or depression. These are not gifts from God. Instead, embrace his goodness as revealed in his word. Believe for miracles. Expect God to answer. Expect him to heal and to deliver. Honor him by believing what he has spoken and by walking in his healing power. God is good, and his goodness is revealed in his power to restore and prosper. He sent his word to heal his people and to rescue them from destruction. This is the testimony of Scripture, and if we believe it, it will be our testimony as well.

The Moral Duty to Receive Healing

The God of Scripture is a God who forgives. He calls us to draw near by confessing our sins and embracing his pardon. This confession is not only a requirement but also an opportunity for us to deepen our communion with God, to experience his mercy and power to renew. In the same way, we must draw near to him by rejecting sickness and receiving the healing he provides. To draw closer to God is to acknowledge his word to forgive and heal, and to receive these gifts by faith. It is not optional to seek and receive healing, and it is not selfish or unspiritual. On the contrary, it is a moral obligation that aligns us with God's word and the work of Christ.

Accepting sickness as something honorable is a perversion of God's revealed will and an insult to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Jesus took upon himself our pains and diseases. He bore them in his body so that we might be free from both sin and sickness. To reject this healing, or even to merely neglect it, is to treat his suffering as worthless and to regard his blood as something of little value. It is our moral obligation to receive the healing that Jesus has secured, for in doing so we honor the sacrifice he made for our complete redemption. When someone attributes nobility to sickness or dares to call it a gift from God, he shows contempt for what Jesus accomplished. We do not honor the cross by embracing what Jesus died to destroy, and we dishonor him if we reject the healing that his suffering was meant to produce.

Jesus made it clear that sickness is not a blessing from God. He declared that it is from Satan, and he healed all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. He treated sickness as an enemy, something to be cast out, something that belongs to the dominion of darkness. Therefore, when someone calls sickness -- something from Satan -- a gift from God, he is exalting Satan and calling him his God. He partners with the devil and spits in God's face. He defies God's nature to heal and mocks the work of Christ. To say that sickness is a gift from God is, theologically speaking, an act of demon worship.

The Bible provides definite instructions regarding healing, and these instructions reveal God's intention for people. It teaches multiple ways to receive and to minister healing. One is to call for the elders of the church to pray for the sick. But in the same context, it also tells all believers to counsel and pray for one another, so that they may be healed. This is a command, not a suggestion. In Scripture, instructions on healing are presented with the same force as those on confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness. Healing is a moral commandment and spiritual obligation. God has made healing available through faith, and we are required to accept it. It is our duty to honor his provision by approaching him in faith and receiving what he has supplied. To refuse is rebellion. The prayer of faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. The promise is also worded as a command to receive healing.

We must condemn sickness in the same way that we condemn sin. God never tells us to accept sin, to glorify it, or to call it his gift. He commands us to repent, to denounce it, and to turn away from it. Sickness must be treated the same way. We are not instructed to glorify it or to embrace it as something holy. We are commanded to reject it and to receive the healing that God has provided. To tolerate sickness as if it were sacred is to defy God just as much as

tolerating sin. Both were targeted by redemption and settled on the same terms. They are enemies of righteousness and must be condemned.

We do not condemn the sinner who is repenting and receiving God's grace to change. Rather, we come alongside him, encourage him, and help him receive forgiveness and victory. But the sinner who refuses to leave his sin, who clings to it and rejects forgiveness, stands in rebellion against God. He must be condemned along with his sin.

The same applies to sickness. We do not condemn a person who suffers and seeks healing from God. We stand with him, pray for him, and encourage him to receive. But if someone refuses to receive healing, if he clings to his sickness and persists in unbelief, then he stands in rebellion just like the one who refuses to repent of his sin. He is failing in his moral obligation to accept what Christ has secured through suffering.

This is a rejection of God, and the person must be exposed and condemned. God has revealed himself as Healer. It is his nature, his name, and his identity. To refuse healing is to refuse God, just as to reject forgiveness is to reject God. Never honor the faithless and stubborn person in his unbelief. Pain does not exempt him from faith. Suffering does not give him the moral right to disobey God or to reject the benefits of the gospel. Just because he is suffering does not mean that God, Jesus, and everyone else must cater to him and feel sorry for him. Grace is being extended to him in the form of a miracle of healing, and he is the one refusing it. Exhort him to acknowledge what the word of God teaches. Admonish him to believe and to receive. If he persists in rejecting healing from God, then condemn him along with his sickness.

The Only Name of Jesus

Peter and John encountered a crippled man at the temple gate. Peter said to him, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The man was instantly healed. When Peter was questioned about the miracle, he declared that the man was healed by faith in the name of Jesus. Then he made the statement that excluded every alternative: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Anyone who tries to find God apart from Jesus Christ only moves further away. But the one who turns to Jesus has already reached the destination, because Jesus is God. He said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." To ask whether Jesus is the only way to God is to ask whether God is the only way to God. It sounds strange because it is strange. Jesus is not one of many teachers pointing to God. He is God. He is the Word made flesh, the perfect and complete revelation of God to humanity. To look for another path is to reject God himself. To seek another way is to forfeit the way entirely.

Jesus did not merely say that he knew the truth. He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." God has made himself known definitively in Jesus Christ. Any attempt to bypass Jesus is an attempt to bypass God, which is contradictory and impossible. The claim that Jesus is the only way to God and to salvation is a statement of fact. He alone can make this claim because he alone is God incarnate.

The uniqueness of Jesus is not like the exclusivity of a prophet or a preacher. Jesus is in a unique position. To consider if Jesus is the only way to God is not like asking whether Isaiah or Jeremiah was the only true prophet. These men were inspired by the Spirit to speak for God, but they were not the message. Isaiah was a great prophet, but he was a servant who pointed away from himself to God. Jeremiah spoke the truth, yet the power of salvation was not in him, but in the God he represented.

On the other hand, Jesus is different in essence and in office. He is not merely a messenger, but he is also the message, the embodiment of the word of God. When Jesus preached for God, he also preached about himself, because he was God's message to the world. The prophets were like signposts along the road, pointing toward the destination, but they were never the destination themselves. You could believe the prophets concerning God, but you could never believe the prophets as God. Jesus, however, is the fulfillment of everything they said. He is the destination, the culmination of God's redemptive plan.

Jesus is not merely a reflection of God, but God himself, come to dwell among us. The incarnation is the foundation of our salvation, because only God could accomplish what was necessary to redeem humanity. The Old Testament sacrificial system pointed ahead to the need for a perfect offering. The blood of bulls and goats could never remove sin, but served only as a shadow of the reality to come. That reality is Christ. He offered himself as the sacrifice for sin. As the incarnate Word, Jesus alone was qualified to fulfill the demands of God's justice. He lived

a sinless life in perfect obedience to the Father and laid down his life as an atoning sacrifice. Only through the shedding of his blood could the penalty of sin be paid and the wrath of God satisfied.

The price had to be paid. Only Jesus could pay it, and only he did. How then can there be another way to salvation? He is the only mediator between God and man. No one else can bridge the gap that sin has created between humanity and God. Only Jesus, fully God and fully man, can stand in that place. He brings reconciliation and makes peace through the blood he shed on the cross. To deny Jesus as the only way to God is to deny the very means by which God has chosen to save us. Why would anyone want to find another way, when the only way stands before us, and it is a way of simplicity and grace?

The exclusivity of Jesus is not an arbitrary restriction, but a necessary consequence of reality itself. Saying that Jesus is the only way to God is simply to say that God is the only way to God, and that only God can meet his own demands. To seek another way is to reject salvation altogether. Any resentment at the idea that there is only one way is resentment against the fact that there is only one God or one reality. This is not a legitimate objection. It is the reaction of a reprobate.

Peter declared that salvation is found only in the name of Jesus immediately after a miracle of healing was performed by that name. The man was not healed by the gift of healing. He was not healed because Peter was an apostle. He was healed by the name of Jesus. Peter said so. He told the crowd not to look at him as if the miracle occurred because of anything in him, but to recognize that the man was healed through faith in the name of Jesus.

In the same way, we are not saved because a preacher has the gift of evangelism, or because there is anything special about the person who brought us the gospel. We are saved by the name of Jesus. There is only one Jesus, and there is only one name of Jesus. You cannot believe in a name that refers to something else and still claim to believe in the name of Jesus. The only name of Jesus is a name that heals the sick, casts out demons, and performs all kinds of signs and wonders. This name, a name that produces miracles, is the only name that leads to salvation.

Suppose a person rejects the deity of Jesus. He does not believe that Jesus is God. Then he cannot claim that he believes in the name of Jesus for salvation. The name means something different to him than what it really means. He can say the same word and make the same sound, but it is not the same name. Now if the name of Jesus saves but does not heal, how is it the same name? How is it the same Jesus? It may carry the same spelling and pronunciation, but it refers to something else.

The Bible says that some people attempted exorcism by telling the evil spirits, "I command you to come out by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." An evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who are you?" And the evil spirit caused a man to attack the exorcists. They tried to use the name without a personal faith and commitment to Jesus, and it backfired. Yet

cessationists and other faithless people are worse. Those exorcists were not saved, but at least they referred to the same Jesus that Paul preached. On the other hand, those who call on the name of Jesus, affirming that it saves but denying that it performs miracles, are referring to a name that no one preached. Both the Christians and non-Christians in the Bible did not know such a name or such a Jesus.

You can be saved only by believing in the same name that the early disciples preached, and the only name of Jesus they knew would heal the sick, cast out demons, and produce miracles. They would have been scandalized at the idea that the name of Jesus would save but not heal the sick or perform signs and wonders. Such a name, such a God, did not exist. They prayed, "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." Here they did not even mention salvation. For them, the name of Jesus was associated with miracles at least as much as salvation.

The Only True Cause

Occasionalism, in theological terms, asserts that God is the sole causal agent behind every event. What men describe as natural causes are not true causes, but rather occasions for God to exercise his power. The doctrine underscores God's continuous and immediate involvement in every aspect of creation, such that nothing happens apart from his direct agency. For instance, the sun's rising and the rain's falling are not results of natural laws acting independently, but of God's consistent action in accordance with his own decrees. Natural laws are at best descriptions of the way God usually acts.

This is distinct from the deistic notion that God created the world and then stepped back to let it run on its own. Occasionalism denies any such abdication of divine authority. The universe has no ability to sustain itself, and it does not have any autonomous principles of causation. Every action and every effect is the immediate result of God's will.

Let us take Jeremiah 14:22 as an illustration. The verse says, "Can any of the false gods of the nations bring rain? Can the skies themselves send down showers? No, O Lord our God, you are the one. Therefore our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this." The prophet asserted that only God can cause even what were considered natural phenomena. People, spirits, and idols cannot cause rain. And the skies themselves cannot bring rain either. They do not possess independent causal power. God is the one who does all such things. God alone is the true cause of every event.

Since God is the necessary and direct cause of every event, there is really no such thing as a secondary cause. Any true cause is never secondary, and anything that is secondary cannot cause anything. We might tolerate its use due to custom, but it is misleading. Alternatives like "apparent cause" or "relational cause" are more accurate. In any case, a so-called secondary cause does not really do anything, but it represents an occasion for God himself to cause an event. Created things do not possess autonomy or efficacy. They do not possess any inherent power to cause anything or to continue to exist.

To illustrate what we mean by occasion, consider the time God divided the Red Sea and directed the Israelites to cross on dry ground. Moses stretched out his staff, and God performed the miracle. The staff had no inherent power to part the waters. It did not even have the power to maintain its own existence. The miracle was not the result of some latent ability within Moses or his staff. Rather, God chose to use the staff as an occasion to demonstrate his own power. The act of stretching out the staff served as the occasion for God to perform the miracle. There was a chronological correlation, but no causation. In fact, the staff could not stretch out by itself, nor could Moses stretch it out independently. Even that was caused by God.

If we are to maintain that God is the only self-existent and necessary being, then it follows that all other entities are contingent, deriving their existence and properties from his will. Contingent beings, by definition, cannot possess independent causal power. If something has

the power to act independently of God, then it must possess self-existence or autonomy, which is impossible given that only God is truly self-existent.

Psalm 104:14 states, "You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth." The Bible attributes the growth of vegetation directly to God. It is not the soil, the sun, or the rain that independently cause growth, but God who orchestrates all these factors in accordance with his will. Similarly, in Acts 17:28, Paul agrees, "In him we live and move and have our being." Every movement, every breath, every heartbeat depends upon God's immediate action.

All creation is dependent on God's active sustaining power. There is no power within creation that acts independently, and there is no principle of causation apart from the direct will of God. God alone is the source, sustainer, and cause of all things. Every event in the universe, whether seemingly ordinary or miraculous, is a manifestation of his will. There are no autonomous forces, no independent powers, and no rival causes. The rain falls, the sun rises, and the heavens move, all by his command. Only God does all these things. This is the doctrine of occasionalism. It is nothing other than a theological statement of what Scripture teaches, and it also resolves a host of philosophical difficulties.

The Reductive-Institutional Approach to Scripture

The Redemptive-Historical Framework

The redemptive-historical approach interprets Scripture as the progressive revelation of God's plan, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Rather than treating biblical texts as isolated moral teachings or abstract doctrines, it recognizes that every passage contributes to a unified, unfolding narrative of redemption. In theory, this method guards against atomizing Scripture into scattered life lessons or disconnected theological points. It invites the reader to trace the divine initiative throughout history, to understand the covenants, the types, the promises, and the fulfillments that center on Christ. When rightly employed, it draws attention not merely to events or principles, but to the character and activity of God revealed across time, enabling a more integrated and God-centered understanding of the Bible as a whole.

The Corruption of the Framework

Although the redemptive-historical approach claims to magnify Christ, in the hands of preachers and scholars it most often functions as a means to limit what people are permitted to believe about him. They routinely use it to suppress the full testimony of Scripture, filtering every passage through a narrow framework that permits only certain pre-approved attributes or actions of Christ. In practice, they never implement a redemptive-historical approach to Scripture, but a reductive-institutional approach that mutilates Christ. A text might clearly reveal him as a healer, a miracle worker, or a provider in response to faith, but these features are then reclassified as merely illustrative or symbolic, never meant to apply to the reader, never meant to describe what Christ does now. In this way, the method is used to amputate the very truths it claims to reveal.

This results in a Christ who is not defined by the totality of Scripture, but by the restrictions imposed by the interpreter. The method becomes a tool of theological reductionism. Whatever Christ says about himself in a given passage is often discarded in favor of a generic summary that aligns with a predetermined portrait. By insisting that the text is "only about Christ," and then dictating what that must mean, the theologian nullifies the revelation of Christ already present in the passage. It is a sleight of hand disguised as reverence, replacing exegesis with evasion. This not only flattens Christology, but disables the reader from receiving what the text promises, commands, and reveals.

The effect is spiritual disfigurement. A method that should expand the believer's vision of Christ ends up shrinking it. A method that should inspire faith ends up installing unbelief. It is now common for those who espouse this approach to brazenly dismiss healing, miracles, prophetic gifts, or answered prayer as applications of the text, even when the text itself speaks plainly about these things. The redemptive-historical approach, as commonly practiced, has become a sophisticated technique for denying the power of God while maintaining a veneer of scholarship and a superficial allegiance to Scripture.

The Rightful Use of the Framework

The redemptive-historical approach is valid in principle. Scripture truly does reveal Christ throughout its history, covenants, types, and promises. But a proper use of the approach must begin with submission to the text itself. It must allow the passage to reveal Christ on its own terms, rather than force the passage to conform to a predetermined image of Christ. The method becomes faithful only when it listens to the voice of God in each specific place, drawing out what he says about himself in that context, without preemptively discarding aspects that make the interpreter uncomfortable. The aim is not to reduce all passages to a single pre-decided theme, but to encounter the manifold wisdom of God in the diversity of revelation.

A faithful use of this approach will expand our knowledge and strengthen our faith. Instead of silencing texts that speak of healing, miracles, or spiritual power, it will recognize these as dimensions of Christ's self-revelation. It will not discard the Christ who heals in answer to faith, or the Christ who commands nature, or the Christ who empowers his people by the Spirit. It will allow the text to teach us how Christ reveals himself, how he deals with people, and what he expects from those who believe in him. A redemptive-historical reading that does not lead to greater faith in Christ and greater expectation of his miraculous power has failed both as a method and as a theology. Its proper function is not to confine, but to unfold. It is not to guard against misapplication by denying application altogether, but to rightly instruct us in who Christ is and what he is doing now.

From Text to Christ: What We Are Meant to See

When the redemptive-historical approach is used rightly, it restores the authority of the text, the fullness of Christ, and the inheritance of the believer. Instead of silencing Scripture, it allows each passage to speak in its own voice, revealing dimensions of Christ that are too often ignored. We see not only the Christ who forgives sins, but the Christ who heals bodies, drives out demons, pours out abundance, and empowers his people to act in his name. The miracles of Jesus are not merely signs that he is the Messiah. They are revelations of what the Messiah is like, and what he continues to do for those who believe.

A proper reading of the Old and New Testaments will affirm not only salvation from sin, but also the outpouring of the Spirit, the authority of faith, the increase of supernatural abilities and ministries, and the evident intervention of God. It will teach that we walk in the legacy of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and Paul, not just as students of history, but as inheritors of promise. The same Christ who acted in the past is active now, and the same power that parted the sea and raised the dead is available to those who believe. This is not sentimental reading or motivational abuse of the text. It is the natural result of letting the text speak plainly about Christ and taking him seriously.

A faithful redemptive-historical reading will not leave the believer with less. It will leave him with more: more vision, more confidence, more obedience, and more faith. It will not reduce the Christian life to waiting for heaven. It will compel him to take possession of what Christ has already given, and to press forward in faith. When Scripture is read as it was meant to be read,

the church does not shrink back into theological minimalism. It rises to proclaim and demonstrate the full gospel of Jesus Christ: in word, in power, and in truth.

The Scam of Suffering

But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (1 Peter 4:15-16)

Suppose a man murders a bunch of people. He steals their belongings and burns down their houses. The police hunts him down and arrests him. He is sentenced to death. Then he makes a grandiose declaration of his faith in God. He recites verses from the Bible about suffering and applies them to himself. He affirms that God is sovereign and has a purpose for his suffering, and that God is with him in his trouble.

You would answer, "The Bible never instructed him to do those things. In fact, the Bible forbids murder and theft. He is suffering because he is a criminal, a thief, and a murderer. God does not honor this kind of suffering. He is not suffering as a Christian. He is suffering as an evildoer." This man is delusional. It is obvious. But a similar kind of delusion is held by the vast majority of people who call themselves Christians. Faithless religionists teach this as their orthodoxy. Faithless suffering, foolish and unnecessary suffering, is the lifeblood of their doctrine and worship.

Peter said, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name." Not all suffering is the same. Not all suffering is virtuous. Not all suffering is good. He was writing to Christians, yet he still made this distinction. Just because you call yourself a Christian does not mean that whatever you experience is because you are a Christian. If you call yourself a Christian and you rob a bank, then you will suffer because you are a criminal, not because you are a Christian, if you are a Christian at all.

There are many other things you can do that could invite suffering that has nothing to do with being a Christian. Peter said that one might suffer as a meddler. Many people think that they are spiritual and cultural warriors, but they are nothing more than meddlers. They use the name of Jesus not for preaching the gospel and healing the sick, but as a platform for their political activism and cultural agenda.

Often, they do not even mention the name of Jesus and the doctrines of the gospel. Rather, they imagine what policies and behaviors ought to be enforced given their supposedly Christian beliefs, and then they promote those policies and behaviors instead of the Christian beliefs. They imagine that if you follow Jesus, then you must do certain things and must not do certain things. Instead of focusing their efforts to preach Jesus so that people will naturally do those things and avoid the other things, they rebuke the people directly concerning these things.

They lobby for legislations for enforcement. They preach about the politicians that would help pass the policies. They denounce those that resist their efforts. Instead of talking about God and Scripture, they talk about politicians and celebrities. Instead of preaching about doctrines,

they preach about policies. They think they are serving God and attacking Satan, but Satan has deceived them. Satan has already won and made them his puppets.

Christians hear more about what the politicians are doing and what the unbelievers are thinking than the wonders of God and the doctrines of Christ. Satan has tricked them into doing activism, not ministry. Activism deals only with symptoms. It cannot touch the hearts of men. For this reason, Satan encourages it, because it gives people the illusion of laboring for righteousness when all the effort and sacrifice are futile. Jesus said, "For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." They want people to see them as prophets, but they are just meddlers.

When they suffer opposition, that is not persecution for their faith. They are not suffering for Jesus, but for their personal beliefs and actions while calling themselves Christians. They suffer because they are using carnal methods and are being obnoxious people. They are meddling people. Even I think they should be persecuted and silenced, so that I will not be associated with such people when I preach Jesus Christ. If a man calls himself a Christian and commits murder, then I would want him to be apprehended, so that people would not think that I am a murderer or that I endorse murder when I promote the gospel. Likewise, if a man is more of a meddler and activist than a Christian, I am not very concerned if he is stopped. Sometimes those people annoy me more than they annoy the non-Christians.

They do not use spiritual weapons, but carnal weapons. They rely on the same methods and resources that the unbelievers use, only that they promote different beliefs and values. These are supposedly Christian beliefs and values, but in reality they are the political implications of their beliefs, and not the supposedly Christian beliefs themselves. In any case, this approach has never worked, and it will never work. Even if the values they promote are correct, it will convince no one, it has no power to change hearts, and it will only make them a nuisance.

Then when Christians bring the true message of the gospel, they face greater resistance, because the unbelievers think that they are like the other people who called themselves Christians, but who were nothing more than meddlers. Christians who are using spiritual methods and bringing a message that can truly save the world must now work against the resentment that has been accumulated against those other so-called Christians who have used carnal methods to advance their political and cultural values. They thought they were prophets who held up the banner of Christ, but they were prophets of their own political and cultural agenda, and who hardened people's hearts against Christ.

Faithless religion is the root of delusional suffering. Religious meddlers are one product of faithless religion. This is because faithless religion is a form of religion without the power. When the power of faith and the Holy Spirit have disappeared, the power of the flesh and the devil are embraced to fill the void. If you can preach and prophesy with miraculous power, and if you can heal the sick, cast out demons, and speak in tongues, then you would do these things. But if you have no faith to do these things, and if your faithless religion condemns these things, then you will need to lobby and meddle to produce any effect.

Delusional suffering is the lifeblood of the historic religion of human orthodoxy. It is a version of counterfeit Christianity that honors the works of Christ with the mouth, but resents the promises of God in the heart. The Faithless preach Jesus with much gusto, but they condemn his ongoing works of healing, prophecy, and other blessings among his people. They condemn Jesus for baptizing his people with the Holy Spirit and miracle power after they have received salvation by faith. They preach democracy as if it is the covenant of God, but they condemn Jesus for enabling all his people to perform miracles, to speak in tongues, and to receive visions and dreams. They preach capitalism as if it is a divine revelation and commandment, but they condemn receiving healing and prosperity from God by faith.

So freedom can come from our votes, but not from God's power. Health and wealth can come from human development, but not from faith in God. In fact, they make it sound heretical and unspiritual to believe in God for health and wealth and miracles. But they strive to make their own miracles, so to speak, by faithless methods. When they inevitably fail and suffer, they hail themselves as heroes. Yet they insist Christians agree with them and live like them. They abuse Scripture the same way that a murderer and rapist would who applies biblical verses about suffering to himself. They are religious hypocrites, the worst kind of scum. They are human garbage.

They lecture Christians to accept suffering, but they are the ones who inflict suffering on Christians who have faith in God to remove suffering. Even murderers, thieves, and meddlers do not necessarily target Christians, but faithless religionists make it their mission to target Christians who believe and obey the teachings of Scripture to remove suffering by teaching, intercession, and working miracles, following the example Jesus. The Faithless suffer defeat due to their lack of faith, but they honor themselves as spiritual heroes. Instead of refusing the bondage of Satan, they regard such suffering as a gift of God. They refuse to enter into the blessings of God, and they forbid others to enter.

One pastor declared, "Don't waste your cancer." He claimed that the suffering could be a gift from God to promote humility and growth. This reeks of privilege. He had thousands of people to support and encourage him. He surrounded himself with famous friends and colleagues. He had stable financial resources and the backing of an institution.

Many people live from paycheck to paycheck, and barely have enough for their daily necessities. A health emergency could devastate the entire family, deplete their savings, plunge them into heavy debt, deprive the children of a decent life and education, and inflict other disastrous and enduring effects. Others have no friends and no families. They are destitute and lonely. When they are stricken with a terminal disease, they do not have anyone to say an encouraging word to them. You answer, "Even when there is no one else, they can turn to God." True! But the preachers tell them that God is the one who has done this to them in the first place. Without a miracle, they are destined to suffer a painful and degrading death, with no one to bury them or even remember them. Then they hear a pastor smugly lecture them about how much of a gift this is, and they become hateful toward God and toward Christians.

What a cruel theology this person preaches. What a self-righteous piece of garbage. He lacked even a superficial compassion that an unbeliever would feel toward suffering humanity. He is not qualified to be a good friend, let alone a spiritual leader and teacher. And he is only one example among thousands upon thousands of religious charlatans. Jesus stood in direct opposition to this approach. When Jesus saw sickness, he obliterated it. And then, the people experienced intense and lasting humility, gratitude, and growth.

Other faithless people will use different words and slogans to push suffering on you, but it is the same scam. You can be free from the kinds of suffering that the Faithless want you to embrace. If you submit to suffering that you do not need to endure, then you have been scammed. You have been scammed by preachers and traditions, and scammed by Satan. Jesus Christ shows you the truth. You do not have to suffer things that you can overcome by faith. You do not have to suffer things that Christ suffered in your place. You do not have to suffer things that God has destroyed at the root.

The Bible says that Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. This ought to settle it. This ought to decide forever how we should think about sickness and healing and miracles. But preachers and theologians will say this thing that Jesus removed is supposed to be the gift of God. Jesus carried away the gift of God! They appeal to the will of God, as if we ought to allow anything that happens to remain as it is, but Jesus performed the will of God by healing the sick and casting out demons. To teach against healing by faith and to refuse to pray for the sick is to oppose the will of God. The same people will encourage you to visit medical doctors and seek a cure, but they will condemn your faith if you seek a miracle of healing from God.

Why do they teach something like this? It is because they have no faith to receive from God, and they cannot help you experience what God has provided for his people, but they still wish to present themselves as spiritual leaders who are full of faith and holiness, so that they can receive honor from you and rule over you. They are corrupt and disgusting. They are self-righteous and self-serving. They don't care about what God says, and they don't care about you. They just want you to think they care. Crush the Faithless under your feet. Defy them. Expose them. Excommunicate them. Cast them out of your life as if you would cast out any demon from hell. Leave this kind of religion forever.

Jesus dedicated a disproportionate amount of his time removing physical suffering and restoring physical comfort to people, and he did it by supernatural power. This is the same power that all of his disciples can wield by faith in the name of Jesus. Then a whole other dimension of power is added to anyone who also receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has never stopped performing miracles and healing people. He said that he would perform even greater miracles through those who have faith in him.

Almost none of the suffering is necessary or honorable in many areas of the world. Most of the suffering is evil, degrading, and dishonoring to God. In societies where Christianity has significant foothold, if certain unbelievers harass you for your faith, you can even walk away

and shut them out of your personal life. It is asinine to become restless and apply biblical verses about suffering to sickness and poverty, and other things that we ought to overcome by faith in God.

Faithless people will try to scam you. They will convince you to suffer. And those who preach suffering are often the same ones who cause the suffering. They are the ones who harass those who refuse to suffer silly and stupid things. When you know their motives and strategies, and when you know the truth about Jesus, you can refuse their scams. Persist in faith. Refuse to suffer. Refuse to suffer silly, stupid things. Refuse to suffer things that God can remove from your life when you have faith in him. Refuse to suffer things that God can protect you from when you have knowledge of the truth.

Refuse to suffer. Put up your faith against it. Refuse to suffer anything unless the word of God commands you to suffer it. The preacher will tell you to suffer and beautify it. He will make it sound spiritual and romantic. Well, if he likes it so much, pray that he will receive all the suffering that he preaches at you. If he preaches that cancer is a gift, pray that he will receive the gift. If he suffers stupid and unnecessary things and boasts about it, pray that he will receive much more of what he is so proud of. As God said, "I will do to you the very things I heard you say." Tell him, "Pastor, may God do to you everything that you have said." If he truly believes that diseases and tragedies are gifts from God, then he should welcome this. As for you, refuse to suffer any of it. They have made life and faith and suffering into a religious game. Refuse to play.

The religion of suffering is designed to distance you from God and the redemption of Christ, and to take away your abilities and resources to invest in the gospel. On the other hand, the religion of Jesus Christ might face opposition from those who preach a religion of suffering, but it will also overcome those things that Christ has suffered in our place and receive the resources that God has provided in Christ Jesus. Have faith in God. Receive blessings and miracles from him. As God helps you make progress, invest in the gospel in various ways so that the domain of Christ can also make progress. And then we can work to remove suffering and bring salvation to other parts of the world.

They Said It to Her Face

The angel Gabriel told Mary right to her face: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." He was an angel. It was a supernatural event. The heavenly being appeared to Mary, and spoke to her in audible and intelligible words. He called her child "Son of the Most High." He said that the child would inherit the throne of David. He promised that his kingdom would last forever. Nothing was unclear. Nothing was hidden. He said all this to her face.

When Jesus was born, some random shepherds showed up out of nowhere. An angel had said to them that the child would be "Christ the Lord." As the angel was telling them this, there appeared a heavenly host praising God and singing about the boy. The angel sent the shepherds to Jesus. Mary was there when they visited the child and marveled at him in front of her.

Then some even more random wise men appeared. They started their journey from far away, and followed a star and went through King Herod to find the boy. The star was supposed to signify the birth of a great king predicted by ancient writings. Then they brought out gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh -- gifts for royalty. And Mary saw these wise men worship the child in front of her. They were educated and wealthy men in another part of the world who should have had no way of knowing about the child or where he was. But they came and worshiped her baby right in front of her.

At the temple, Simeon took the child in his arms and spoke by the Holy Spirit. He said that the child was the salvation of God, the light of revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. Simeon said to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel." He said this to her face. Anna the prophet also came forward and spoke about the child to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. She did this right in front of her.

After all of this, Mary still did not know Jesus. It looked like she had no idea who he was. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went missing during a visit to Jerusalem, and Mary searched for three days before it occurred to her to look for him at the temple. Of course, Joseph was also slow about this, but unlike Mary, people never made him into some kind of super saint. They found Jesus in the temple, sitting among the teachers. When they found him, Mary scolded him, saying, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." Jesus answered, "Why did you have to search? Didn't you know that I would be at my Father's house?"

It is not merely our interpretation that there was something wrong with Mary. Jesus himself said she should have known where to find him. She should have assumed that he was there. After everything that had been said to her face, and after everything that had been done right in front of her, she should have known where he would be. Jesus was all about God. The angel told her to her face, that he would be called "Son of the Most High." Any mentally functioning

person should have known. The Bible even said a few times that Mary thought about what she experienced. But she still did not know! She had no idea. She was shocked. She was frustrated.

Many years after this event, and after Jesus had launched his ministry, it appeared that Mary was among those who thought that he was insane. The Gospels record that his family went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." When his mother and brothers arrived, they stood outside and sent someone in to call him. They wanted to take him home, probably to stop his ministry. Despite all that had been said to her face, even by angels and prophets, and despite everything that had happened around Jesus right in front of her, from ancient predictions, to angels singing on top of people's heads, to having a vision to escape the king's murder attempt, Mary still seemed to side with those who doubted Jesus, those who thought he had lost his mind. She should have been his strongest supporter, but when she appeared in his ministry, she stood outside and wanted to take him away. All this is amazing to read, that a person could be like this.

When someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," Jesus replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." He did not simply say, "Also blessed" or even "More blessed" are those who obey, but he said "Blessed rather" are those who obey, as if those who obey belong to a different and superior category of people. This could be an indication that Mary was not among those who hear and obey the word of God, and Jesus became dismissive of her role. This is something to consider, but we will not push this perspective too far based on scant evidence.

Nevertheless, Jesus indeed contradicted the idea that Mary was especially blessed just because she was his mother. He made it clear that true blessing comes from hearing and obeying the word of God, but this describes the life of any ordinary disciple. Being a Christian in good standing is more blessed than being the mother of Jesus. In comparison, Mary's biological connection to Jesus meant very little. Did Mary hear and obey the word of God? Even without the statement from Jesus, the evidence up to this point indicates that she did not.

There is evidence that Mary finally became a follower of Jesus. She was present with the disciples in Jerusalem after his ascension, waiting for the promised Holy Spirit. She was among those who received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost. Since Jesus said that to obey the word of God is more blessed than to be his biological mother and to give birth to him, this means that Mary's most excellent spiritual attainment on record was not when she accepted the word of God and conceived the body of Jesus, but it was when she believed and obeyed the word of God to receive the Holy Spirit and to speak in tongues. However, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues is something still rejected by many who claim to be Christians and who have the benefit of reading about Mary's absurdly slow road to discipleship. This makes them even worse than Mary.

Mary eventually understood and believed. She became a follower of Jesus, trailing behind thousands of others who experienced fewer advantages but who started to follow Jesus years before she did. It took her a long time, far longer than it should have, when God told her with

overwhelming clarity who Jesus was since the beginning. Mary was never the super saint and mother that people imagined. She was spiritually dull, reluctant to believe and understand, and she underestimated her son's identity and mission. The angel spoke to her, the shepherds spoke to her, the wise men spoke to her, the prophets spoke to her, and Jesus himself spoke to her. They said what they knew right to her face, but she did not believe or understand. We have no solid evidence that she became a disciple before the resurrection of Jesus.

And then, Mary was never mentioned again.

Angry Jesus

The image of Jesus that dominates the modern mind is fraudulent. He is described as gentle, inclusive, tolerant, and endlessly patient. This portrayal does not come from Scripture. It is the product of people who prefer a savior who would never expose them or condemn them. The Jesus of Scripture speaks with crushing authority. He is compassionate toward the broken, but fierce toward the proud. He heals the sick, but calls religious leaders serpents and children of hell. He raises the dead, but drives men out of the temple with a whip. His anger displays his righteousness. It is not a defect.

When Jesus entered the temple and saw merchants selling animals and exchanging money, he did not smile and explain a better way. He made a whip of cords and drove them out. He overturned their tables and scattered their coins. He called them thieves, and he said they made the place a den of robbers. As the Scripture says, "Zeal for your house will consume me." Jesus was not out of control. He was fulfilling the word of God. He did this at the beginning of his ministry and again at the end, showing that his hatred of religious corruption was not momentary. He would not tolerate men turning worship into business. He would not allow the place of prayer to be defiled by profit. Many who claim to love Jesus today would have rebuked him if they had seen him do this. They would have called it abusive and violent. They have no part in him.

When the Pharisees watched to see if Jesus would heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, he asked whether it was lawful to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill. They said nothing. They preferred to protect their tradition rather than help a man in need. Scripture says Jesus looked at them with anger. He was grieved at their hardness of heart. His anger was directed at the way they used human doctrine to prevent mercy. He exposed their cruelty and then healed the man in front of them. His power and his anger worked together. He bypassed their authority entirely. His response shamed them with truth and power. The man's hand was restored, and their dead religion was exposed. They reacted with hatred instead of repentance, and immediately began to plot his death. They could not withstand a man animated by the holy power of righteous anger.

When Peter tried to persuade Jesus that he should not suffer and die, Jesus responded with a harsh statement. He said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me." Peter had just confessed Jesus as the Christ, but then tried to divert him from the will of God. Jesus did not coddle him. He did not say, "I understand your feelings." He did not say, "Thank you for caring." He recognized that even the concern of a friend could become a satanic voice when it contradicts the plan of God. The correction was not polite. Both the tone and the words were severe. It was a sharp rejection of a mindset that tried to reinterpret divine mission in terms of human compassion. Sentimental opposition to the cross is still satanic.

When Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept. He wept because they had rejected the truth and would suffer judgment. He did not rejoice in their destruction, but he did not excuse their rebellion either. After his lament, he entered the temple and drove out those

who sold there. This second cleansing confirms that his grief and his anger coexisted. His tears and his zeal moved together. His sorrow came with rebuke. There was no confusion in him, no inner conflict. He stood complete in justice and love. The softness people often project onto Jesus does not appear here. It has no connection to what he did. His love carried strength. His anger carried truth. They were never divided.

When Jesus delivered his public condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, he was not gentle. He did not hold back. Speaking in full view of the people, he called them hypocrites, blind guides, fools, whitewashed tombs, serpents, and murderers. He did not invite discussion, but delivered judgment. He told them they were full of greed and self-indulgence, and that their righteousness was fake. He said they were children of those who killed the prophets, and that they would not escape the judgment of hell. It was the Son of God denouncing false leaders in front of their followers, not the voice of religious tolerance. The entire chapter is an expression of divine wrath.

These examples showed who Jesus truly was. They were not deviations from his character. He was angry at hypocrisy and rebellion. His anger was not a flaw in his humanity, but a revelation of divine justice and holiness. In his anger, he fulfilled the will of God and committed no sin. He demonstrated that anger is not always wrong and godliness is not always gentle. And love does not imply tolerance. Jesus rejected falsehood and opposed compromise. He declared the truth without bending it to serve religious or cultural norms.

People hate Jesus for his anger, because it exposes and threatens them. It unmask their religion and shatters their illusions. They want a savior who smiles and blesses, one who never condemns and never causes conflict. But Jesus confronts. He attacks and denounces. His anger is an expression of righteous displeasure. If you reject it, you reject him. The same Jesus who heals the sick and feeds the hungry also calls men vipers and overturns their tables. The same Jesus who welcomes children also tells entire cities that they are doomed. The same Jesus who lays down his life also curses the fig tree and curses people to hell. Jesus is not safe for the faithless.

Jesus is the exact image of God. His anger expresses his love for truth and zeal for his people. He condemns evil with a shout and drives out corruption. He tears away the farce of religious hypocrisy. If you follow him at all, this is the Jesus you must accept. If you belong to him, you will love what he loves and hate what he hates. Christ is not what the world expects. He brings mercy, but he also brings judgment. He is the terror of the proud and the refuge of the faithful.

From Debate to Action

"Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you." (Matthew 7:6)

Debate serves a purpose. It clarifies truth and confronts error. In some cases, it is necessary to endure long discussions, not because the truth is unclear, but because the one who hears it refuses to accept it. Debate, in this context, is a form of confrontation rather than exploration.

When you know the truth, debate is for others. Action is for you. God's word is given not only to be explained and defended, but to be obeyed. It makes no sense to defend the truth of Christ but never come to him, or to declare his promises but never receive them. Those who do so may appear to honor him, but they remain defeated, even condemned. A man who defends the kingdom but never enters it will perish just like the one who attacks it.

The same principle applies to healing and every other provision of the gospel. A person may speak rightly about what Christ has accomplished. He may declare that redemption provides healing for the body, and that it is received and ministered by faith. He may debate with those who oppose, and win. But if he never receives it for himself, if he never offers it to others, no one is healed. His efforts have not led to participation. In some cases, this failure results in continued sickness and weakness in his own life. In other cases, it allows the people around him to suffer needlessly while he rehearses explanations. The truth was not given for endless debate with the unbelieving.

There is a difference between contending for the truth and being detained by those who oppose it. A man may speak to those who argue, but he must not let them trap him in their position. They remain where they are because they reject what has been revealed. If he continues to linger among them, explaining what he understands, repeating what he has settled, he unknowingly takes on the same posture of inaction and disobedience. He is standing still among those who refuse to move. It is not enough to disagree with the Faithless. He must leave them. He must put his faith and knowledge into action.

Jesus warned his disciples not to give what is holy to those who would profane it, and not to cast their pearls before those who would treat them with contempt. The gospel is to be preached, but it is not to be endlessly trampled. There comes a time when persistence becomes complicity, when debate ceases to be a defense of truth and becomes a distraction from it. The one who knows what God has said must walk in it. If others resist, he may speak again. If they harden themselves, he must move forward. He is not bound to their refusal. If he does, then he too will become unfruitful, as if he is disobedient like the others.

The word of God demands faith and action. It is not delivered so that it may be debated forever. The person who receives it is no longer at the stage of evaluation. He must now live by it and experience it. If he continues to speak only to persuade others, while failing to act for himself, he becomes the kind of person James warned about, one who hears but does not do,

one who sees but walks away unchanged. He thinks that he defends the faith and obeys the truth, but he deceives himself. This is not an argument against debate, but it is a warning against hiding behind it and replacing action with it. A man who sees the truth may engage in debate for the sake of others, but he must not delay his own obedience. The knowledge he holds must lead to participation.

Qualification in God

"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." (1 Corinthians 1:26)

Scripture does not flatter us. When God called us, the world did not admire us. We were dismissed as ignorant, weak, and unimportant. The call of God found us when we had no standing in the world. Yet he summoned us and made us his own. He did not consult the world when he chose us. He acted from his own purpose and power.

Paul told his readers to consider their calling. They did not begin with human greatness. It was a reminder of what God valued. He did not need their human wisdom or strength. He disregarded all qualifications and established his own. The call of God created what it demanded. He spoke the world into existence. He generates faith in the hearts of men. His call is a creative act, not an invitation to prove ourselves. It is an act of power that brings us into life.

Even so, there have always been those who had education or influence. Paul himself was trained in the law. Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house. Some of us began with more resources than others. These are not a threat to God's purpose. He has created these conditions and uses them as he sees fit. Yet even the learned and powerful must come the same way. All must become fools from the viewpoint of unbelievers in order to become wise before God. All must lose their claim to personal glory. The strong must bow, and the wise must forget their own brilliance. No one is exempt from this pattern. The call of God strips us of our pride and clothes us with Christ.

There are moments when Christians question themselves. They know what God has said, but they hesitate. They examine the task, then examine themselves, and they find no match. They speak, and their voice sounds small. They act, and their hands seem weak. This response appears most often in those who have not renewed their minds by the word of God. They think they believe the truth, yet they are preoccupied with their own limits. They see what they lack. They remember how others see them.

But none of this changes God. He did not choose us because we had something. He did not send us because we proved ourselves. He called us, and he remains with us. What he begins, he finishes. He does not need human credentials. He does not look for strength among men to secure his plan. He supplies what he requires. He is wisdom and power. He is all-sufficient in himself, and he shares that sufficiency with us. His word in our mouth is the same word that created the world. His Spirit in our body is the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead. He does not observe our weakness and adjust his purpose. He works through us precisely to display his own strength.

This explains his preference for the lowly. He bypassed the rulers and honored the children. The gospel advanced through fishermen, tentmakers, and former slaves. God selected the people

and things the world dismissed as worthless. He raised the broken to shame the proud. He held up the crucified Christ to dismantle the wisdom of the age. The cross was more than a strategy. It served as a judgment, exposing the emptiness of every system that claimed to understand power. When God raised Jesus from the dead, he did not merely vindicate one man. He overturned the entire structure of the world and established his own.

So the faithful do not shrink back when they feel unqualified. They agree with God. They confess his truth and walk in his power. Their qualification does not arise from their own ability. It rests in the one who lives within them. He does not draw from human minds or rely on human strength. He speaks wisdom and imparts power. He selects what the world rejects. He brings into being what did not exist. He gives his own righteousness, his own Spirit, and his own name.

You Say You Were Once

Some people begin with a boast. They say, "I used to be a Christian," or "I used to be Charismatic," as if this settles the matter. As if past participation gives them more credibility to reject what others believe today. But it is no proof of wisdom. It is a sign of disillusionment. Your history does not validate you. It indicts you. All it proves is that you were close enough to know better. You are not more qualified to speak. You are more responsible for your unbelief.

This pattern appears in two forms. The first is the man who now calls himself an atheist. He says he used to believe, but now he sees through it all. In truth, he never believed. He followed a group, not Christ. He watched people, not the word. When the group failed him, he left. But his departure was not a movement from error to truth. Now he says faith is childish and the Bible is false, and he thinks this is progress. But he has not grown. He has descended into mockery and despair. The Bible speaks of such men in Hebrews 6. They have tasted, but not consumed. They have seen, but not turned. They are crucifying Christ once again.

The second form is more subtle. It is the man who still claims to be a Christian, but says, "I used to believe in miracles," or "I used to be Charismatic," or "I used to speak in tongues." He now calls himself reformed or sober or discerning. But he shares the atheist's mindset. He also uses past exposure to discredit present faith in others. He speaks as if he has graduated out of naivety. But what he has really done is replace the enthusiasm of his early days with a hard shell of suspicion. He mocks what he never understood. He thinks he has become deeper, but he has only become colder.

Some of them wander from one opinion or tradition to another, always looking for something credible. But they never look to Christ. They look to movements, leaders, and theological brands. When those fail them, they lash out, not only at the people who misled them, but at the doctrines they never embraced. They blame the Charismatic Movement, or the Pentecostals, or those who practice healing and prophecy. But their problem was never the movement. Their problem was themselves. They never believed the Bible. They never trusted the word. They never understood faith.

They now parade their cynicism as maturity. They say the Bible must be interpreted through historical caution, not through confident faith. They say miracles ceased, because their former leaders were fanatics or charlatans. They quote theologians instead of apostles, and rebrand their fatigue as orthodoxy. But they have not become discerning. They have become defeated. Their voice sounds like experience, but it is only weariness. They do not speak with the insight of truth. They speak with the tremble of someone burned by man and now afraid of God.

And why should anyone have to be in a movement to believe the Bible? Who told you that Christianity must take the shape of a trend, a culture, a faction? Why do you speak of faith only in terms of your former group, as if every believer must belong to a tribe? If you could only believe when surrounded by noise, emotion, or popularity, or if you could only move when

carried by a herd, then the weakness was always in you. The Charismatic Movement did not ruin you. You were already shallow. You were already unstable.

There are people who come out of excess and become established. They emerge from disorder and become fruitful. But you are not one of them. You claim you came out of confusion, but now you reject clarity. You say you left error, but now you scorn power. You once trusted imperfect men. Now you trust in your own cynicism. But you have never trusted God. You have not become discerning. You have become suspicious of everything except your own bitterness.

You say you used to believe in miracles. But that does not prove that miracles failed you. It proves that you fell from faith. You say you used to be charismatic. So what? Who says the rest of us want to be charismatics? It does not mean you outgrew childish things. It means you never understood childlike trust. You think you have risen into orthodoxy. But you have only shrunk into spiritual paralysis. And if you now resist the power of God while still claiming the name of Christ, then your fall is quieter than the atheist's, but no less severe. You do not claim to deny Christianity. You have redefined it in your own image.

You say you were once a Christian, or once Charismatic, or once full of faith for healing and miracles. But your past only magnifies your present condition. If you were never genuine, then your rejection of the truth is no surprise. You were the hypocrite. But if you once seemed to believe, and now you speak against faith, then you have decayed into something far worse. Whether you now call yourself an atheist or a more discerning Christian, your pattern is the same. You look back on what you never grasped, and now use that ignorance as a weapon.

You think it gives you authority to tear down what others believe. But it only exposes that you have never known the word of God, never trusted the voice of Christ, never walked in the Spirit. Your disillusionment is not insight. Your caution is not discernment. Your coldness is not holiness. Whether you now speak from outside the church or from within it, your voice resists the power of God. And unless you repent, your end will match your unbelief.

The Triumph of Grace

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

The complaint is old and rehearsed: seeker-friendly preaching offers grace without judgment, comfort without confrontation. And so, many who consider themselves faithful have made it their mission to emphasize sin. They have turned themselves into professional accusers of man, convinced that they are protecting the gospel. But in the end, they merely reinforce the diagnosis and withhold the cure. They speak of corruption, but scarcely of righteousness. They preach the wrath of God, but only whisper the gift of Christ. They begin with sin and end with silence, or they append grace as a theological afterthought. Those who confess Christ after hearing them get more of the same, as if Christ has made no difference.

Paul preached something else entirely. In his letter to the Romans, he wrote that where sin increased, grace increased all the more. The comparison is not even. Grace overwhelms sin. The gift of Christ exceeds the trespass of Adam in every way. It does not merely undo the Fall, but overthrows it. If sin buried me ten feet deep, Christ raised me a thousand stories high. My righteousness is not just enough to cover my guilt, it surpasses it by infinite measure, because it is not mine at all. It is the righteousness of God, and it has been imputed to me.

Now I come before the throne of grace as if I were Christ himself. I enter with boldness, not with trembling and self-doubt. I do not ask whether I belong here. I belong here as much as Jesus belongs here, because I stand in his righteousness and not my own. Long ago, I counted my righteousness as rubbish and cast it away. So I come with no sense of inferiority or shame. I come with the same confidence that Christ himself would have in the presence of the Father.

When I face disease or demon, I do not try to muster up the authority to command it. It is easy to believe that Christ has that authority, and as his follower I walk in his righteousness and speak in his name. Human orthodoxy may have trained generations to describe themselves as worms before God, but any believer is a billion times more worthy than the sin-consciousness they insist on preserving. I approach God with the worthiness of Christ, not my own. If I had to repair my own worthiness before I approach him, I would never come at all.

His righteousness has become my natural environment and mentality. The more theologians speak of our supposed unworthiness before God, the more they reveal how far they are from the gospel. If they understood what it means to be in Christ, they would see that our righteousness is now complete, because his righteousness is complete. There is no need to approach God as a groveling sinner. Approach as a son in whom he delights, because God delights in Christ. He was crucified, and I was crucified with him. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and he is not a sinner. God will always answer someone like him. Therefore, God will always answer me.

They tell us to examine ourselves, and we do. But after that we turn our entire attention to examine the righteousness of Christ. A preacher may move himself to tears as he speaks of the glory of our future inheritance, but we rejoice in it now, because the Bible says, as he is, so are we in this world. This is true now, not later. The Bible says it is not fully known what we shall be, and this only shows that there is even more to come. A theologian may lecture us that we have a finite mind. But Scripture says God has given us the mind of Christ, and he has become wisdom for us from God. If a preacher or theologian does not acknowledge this, then is he a Christian at all?

Those who think they are defending the gospel often end up with less of it than the ones they criticize. They accuse false teachers of preaching a good news that is, well, too good. But they preach bad news with only a faint nod to the good news, if even that. Why? Because they do not believe the good news themselves. They do not believe the gospel, and they have invented an imitation that reflects their own inadequacies rather than the righteousness of Christ. They accuse us of triumphalism, as if the problem is that we believe the gospel too much, or at all. But if it is triumphalism to affirm a genuine salvation in Christ, then they must think that Christ is unrighteous and unworthy, even a sinner. Otherwise, why accuse us of anything, since we depend on Christ alone? Their charge of triumphalism is blasphemy.

The Holiness of Power

The Faithless have done many wicked things, but one of the most diabolical is how they have unfairly undermined spiritual power. They say it is unspiritual. They treat it as unimportant. Some pretend it was only for the past, reserved for apostles and prophets. In doing this, they have gutted the Christian life and sterilized the church. They have declared that God should remain silent and invisible. They have defined spiritual maturity as the absence of power. They have made human weakness the standard for godliness, and they have invented a gospel that keeps God away.

This distortion was never innocent. It did not arise from a sincere reading of Scripture or an attempt to understand God's will. It was a strategic dismantling of divine activity. Satan saw what power did in the life of Christ. He saw what power did in the early church. He saw how healing the sick, casting out demons, and commanding nature announced the presence of the kingdom and advanced the gospel. And he saw what power would do if believers in every generation began to live like that. So he devised a scheme. He disguised his fear as Christian orthodoxy. He whispered that power is irrelevant. He taught that power is unwise. He convinced many that power is worldly and fleshly. He masked his panic as piety.

But what is power? It is not merely the ability to perform miracles or make things happen. Power is God himself. When power is in motion, it is his presence expressed in effect. The power that heals the sick is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. The power that casts out demons is the same power by which Christ upholds the universe. The power that causes a person to speak in tongues, or to prophesy, or to walk on water is not an impersonal force. It is God himself moving. Scripture does not divide him into categories. God is love. God is holiness. God is power. To separate these is to carve up the divine nature. To diminish one is to offend the whole.

To say that power is unspiritual is to speak blasphemy. It is to say that God is unspiritual. It is to say that his work is beneath his character. It is to say that the very things he did in Scripture are somehow improper for us to desire. But there is no godliness apart from power. There is no spirituality apart from power. There is no New Testament Christianity that does not burst with power, miracles, and signs that cause men to fall on their faces and confess that God is truly among us.

Some pretend to preserve reverence for God by reserving power for a few. They say power was only for apostles and prophets, as if God's nearness has a time limit. But if power is God himself, and he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then any doctrine that limits power limits God. Any claim that power is gone is a claim that God has withdrawn. Any theory that miracles ended with the apostles is a theory that God's hand has closed and his presence has faded.

If power was given only to them, then God was given only to them. If miracle-working power confirmed their message, then we have no confirmation today. If the Spirit fell in visible glory

upon them, but now comes only as an idea or a quiet feeling, then something greater was given to them than is available to us. But this is false. It is heresy dressed as humility. This is not good news at all. The gospel is the good news that God is here, that Christ has won, and that deliverance has arrived.

This is why it is never wrong to seek power. It is never immature to desire it. Power is the main event, not a distraction, because God is power. It is the very reality of God, no less than love and justice. To love God is to love power. To hunger for righteousness is to hunger for power. To preach the gospel is to release power. And to pray in faith is to summon power. The one who knows God, who is love, cannot undermine the idea of love. We can say the same about patience, justice, and other things that the religious think about God. But we must say the same about power. The Christian who seeks power is not carnal. He has the right desire. It is the natural instinct of the regenerate spirit. He is following God himself.

We must also discard the obsession with balance. Balance is a mask for unbelief. It is a polite way to say, "You have too much of God." No one says, "Have some love, but not too much." No one warns, "Be joyful, but stay balanced with depression and suicidal thoughts." Yet when it comes to power, people imagine that there is such a thing as excess. They warn about too much emphasis on miracles and prophecies, as if God himself is a danger to our spiritual life. But this is nonsense. Power is good. More power is better. There is no limit to how much of God we should desire and embrace.

Power and love are never in conflict. God is both power and love, and together they form a single perfection, just as God is one and he is perfect. His compassion is almighty. When Jesus forgave sins, he also healed the paralyzed, touched the leper, rebuked the storm, and destroyed the works of the devil. His miracles were the outworking of love. Love reaches its true expression only when there is power. In fact, the love of God is present only when the power of God is present, because God is one. When the power of God is not there, what you see is the virtue of man pretending to be the love of God.

When Christians undermine power, they surrender to a different gospel. When churches discourage the pursuit of miracles, they betray the very Spirit they claim to follow. When theologians reduce power to allegory, they create a religion that has little to do with Christ and that cannot reach the world. The result is a faith that looks holy to ignorant men, but lacks substance and salvation. It sounds religious, but it is false and it produces nothing. And it allows Satan to operate unopposed, while the people of God wait for a better time.

But that better time is now. The gospel is here. The Spirit is here. And power is here. The same God who split the sea and shook the mountain is present in the one who believes. The same Christ who walked on water lives in every person who confesses his name. The same Spirit who raised him from the dead gives life to mortal bodies and causes miracles and prophecies to overflow. God is power, and that power belongs to us.

Power and Holiness

Satan has deceived the church into believing that holiness is superior to power, as if power were a distraction or a threat to true godliness. This false dichotomy has crippled generations of believers. It is an assault on the knowledge of God. It mutilates his divine nature and perverts the faith of his people, turning the Christian life into a caricature of morality without miracle and discipline without effect or purpose. Instead of exalting holiness, this distortion redefines it into something that shuts God out and honors an idol. It is a lie born from hell and reinforced by the Faithless to separate believers from the fullness of God.

This distortion appears in every part of religious life. Christians claim to exalt holiness above all, and then define it in the most pitiful and human terms. They reduce it to behavior and temperament. A holy man, in this view, is someone with good manners and emotional restraint. A holy church is one with modest dress codes and a serious tone. And the boldest believers are political activists for their supposedly Christian ideology. Worthless and pathetic! In this way, they disguise mediocrity as maturity. They call their powerlessness humility and orthodoxy. They act as if their moral posture puts them on higher ground than those who pursue the supernatural. All this is based on a lie about the nature of holiness itself.

The truth is that holiness cannot be separated from power, because both belong equally to the nature of God. God is not composed of disconnected traits, as if we could isolate them, rank them, or put them in tension with one another. His love is not at odds with his justice. His justice is not a threat to his mercy. His holiness is not something that competes with his power. God is one. His attributes are ways that he reveals himself and by which we may talk about him. They are expressions of the same divine being, and they exist in perfect unity. It is impossible to divide them or to exalt one above another. There is no such God whose holiness can be separated from his power, or whose power can be separated from his love.

Yet this is what the Faithless have done. They have created a version of God that does not exist. They teach about holiness as if it were a self-contained ideal, something to be cultivated apart from the presence and power of God himself. They speak as if holiness means mere kindness, humility, moral cleanliness, and the like, as if these attributes define the divine nature. But they are describing a human ideal, not a divine reality. They can coram deo all day long, but if their notion of holiness is merely ontological and moral otherness, and our holiness is nothing more than an ethical imitation, then they know nothing about the holiness of God. Their holiness is a fiction, a fragile counterfeit that recoils from the divine majesty of true holiness. They do not believe in a holiness that encompasses moral separation, ontological otherness, and at the same time a love that works miracles, and a power that sacrifices. Their idea of holiness, in other words, exposes the fact that their religion is purely human. And by preaching this version of holiness, they have rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel does not establish a religion that offers mere moral reformation. It is good news from another world, announcing a comprehensive program of deliverance and regeneration. It creates a new humanity that walks with God in all his attributes. For God is one, and it is

impossible to relate to him in only a few of his attributes while forbidding the rest. When Jesus preached the gospel, he did not just talk about righteousness and sin. He healed the sick and cast out demons, and performed many kinds of miracles. His holiness was radiant with supernatural power. The gospel was announced in the only legitimate fashion: in words and miracles. This is the only gospel the Bible knows. And this is the gospel the Faithless have lost.

They imagine that their emphasis on character is godly, when in fact it is a renunciation of God. By elevating their definition of holiness above power, they have condemned themselves. They have committed themselves to a false image of God. They refuse to seek power because they claim it is inferior to holiness. This shows they are unintelligent in theology. To desire wisdom from God, not apart from him, is a mark of holiness. To strive to love like God is also a mark of holiness. Likewise, to walk in the supernatural power of God is a mark of holiness. For power is not an optional supplement to holiness. Power is holiness. True holiness is defined by infinite power.

Faithless religion resists this. It insists that God is holy because he is distinct from his creation, so that holiness in man means mere moral separation. However, this is so pathetic that it makes God himself look feeble before the world. God is holy not only in the ethical sense, but in the ontological sense as well. He is different, and he is better. He is holy because he is perfect and infinite in all his attributes: in righteousness, in wisdom, in love, and in supernatural power. A theology that claims we ought to imitate him in all aspects except in miracle power is a transparent fraud. Just another religious scam. When Scripture says that God is holy, it is not calling attention only to his moral excellence. It is calling attention to the fullness of all his perfections. His holiness is thunder and lightning, miracle and judgment, and it is precisely this holiness that Christ brought into the world and commanded his disciples to receive. It is beautiful beyond all our imagination, and the Faithless wrecked it.

Jesus did not come to exemplify weakness disguised as patience. He came to display the glory of the Father. He was the image of the invisible God, the exact imprint of his nature. He was not merely holy in character. He was holy in power, not that the two can be distinguished in the first place. He drove out demons and diseases with a word. He calmed a storm with a command. He spoke to a fig tree and it withered. He was feared for his authority. When accused of casting out demons by demonic power, he weaponized a doctrine to refute and damn his opponents. When he entered the temple, he turned physical and flipped over the tables. But he did not exert only physical effort. When he was arrested and answered, "I am," the crowd fell to the ground. He did not exhibit anything like our lame and creepy "virtue." He went on the offensive and declared that the kingdom of God was upon them. That was holiness. And Jesus demonstrated that divine majesty could be revealed through a human body, one like what we have.

There is no holiness unless we imitate this Christ. That means imitating his power, not just his compassion and humility. We must walk in supernatural success, not just religious dignity. Holiness means confidence in the promises of God for signs and wonders. It is unholy, even demonic, to doubt God and to make excuses. Holiness means reaching out with compassion to

heal the sick through miracles and to encourage the downcast through prophecies, with supernatural insights. This kind of holiness cannot be manufactured by human effort or discipline. It comes from faith. Without faith, holiness becomes a parody of itself. Without power, holiness becomes a religious clown show before the world, because it is not holiness at all. It flatters the faithless religious conscience while rejecting the life of Christ.

This is what has happened to the church. It has traded Christ for virtue. It has traded miracles for politics. It no longer believes the gospel that turns the world upside down. It is comfortable with failure as long as it looks pious, and as long as it can lie its way through to claim the moral high ground. Why does the faithless theologian refer to God's holiness only as other, as trauma, or if it can be reduced to human experience, as virtue? It is because a faithless person is fundamentally estranged from God. The fact that he is religious only obscures this fact to himself and to others. Such a man does not know the God of Moses or Elijah. He cannot know the God of the apostles, or the God of Jesus Christ. He exclaims, "Look! Atheists run from him!" But he runs from God just the same, only that he is far more hypocritical than the atheist, because he pretends that he embraces the one that he denies.

Holiness is measured by how much of God is in a man, not by how the man measures up to a list of virtues. And God is power. Is he not love? Of course, and love is power. Justice is power. Wisdom is power. Mercy is power. Every attribute of God ends in miracles. This is the holiness he gives to his people. How is this possible? By the regeneration of the heart, the infusion of faith, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Holiness confounds human norms and virtues. It is supernatural, victorious, and full of glory.

Power to Be Witnesses

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8)

When a person receives Jesus Christ, he is born again. He is made into a new creation. He receives a new identity and a new nature. He is no longer a child of the devil but a child of God, born from above. This transformation is a miracle. It is the most radical change that can happen to a human being. Such a man is powerful even before he receives the Holy Spirit, because he belongs to God. He is born of God and possesses the knowledge of the truth. But the promise of Christ is greater still. For those who have received him and believed in his name, he now says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." This is not the new birth, but an endowment of power to make the believer an effective witness for Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to serve, to speak, to write, to heal, and to confront the world in the name of Jesus. This is an infusion of the Spirit's presence and power. The man speaks, and the Spirit moves. The man writes, and the Spirit strikes. The man touches, and the Spirit heals. This is the witness that Jesus had in mind. He did not say, "You will receive eloquence," or "You will receive charisma," although you may very well receive these things also. But he said, "You will receive power."

Jesus himself exemplified this. He was the Son of God from the beginning. Born without sin, he possessed the wisdom of heaven from childhood. He astounded teachers in the temple. He walked in righteousness and was filled with understanding. But when it came time to begin his public ministry, he waited. He waited until the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove. He waited until he was clothed in power. And it says that he returned from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. The Word, who was God, entered his ministry only when the Spirit rested upon him. This was the pattern for the Son of God, and this is the pattern he orders for us. First we are born again, then we receive power. First regeneration, then endowment. First the creation of the new man, then the release of divine energy upon him.

Many do not understand this, and so they live as if rebirth is the end of God's work in them. They remain sons, but passive sons. They remain heirs, but inactive heirs. But God intends for sons to be witnesses, and witnesses require power. The gospel is an announcement, a proclamation of the word. And when that word is delivered by a man who walks with the Spirit, it becomes a message that bursts with power. I have preached in places where the atmosphere changed mid-sentence. The air in the room thickened. The listeners froze in their seats. The atmosphere became dense, even physical. It was as though the words created a pressure in the room. I could feel it as I walked the platform, as if pushing against invisible weight. The audience was seized. Some were enthralled. Others were terrified. This was not because of vocal performance. It was the presence of God bearing down on the message and the messenger.

The same thing happens in writing. People have been healed reading the Bible. People have come to faith by reading a single sentence from the word of God. There is power in the words, because the Spirit inhabits the ideas of God. This is what makes biblical truth explosive. The Spirit is not just a warm breeze behind the gospel, he is the fire within it. He is the person and the force who makes God's thoughts active. The preacher delivers the truth, and the Spirit delivers the power. The author writes the idea, and the Spirit plants it like a seed that grows into life. The power is in God and in the truth he reveals.

This power can be transferred in any mode that carries the word. Spoken language. Written text. Sign language. There is no restriction. The Spirit is not confined. If a deaf and mute person is told the gospel through signs, and he receives the truth of Jesus Christ, the same Holy Spirit can strike him in that moment. His ears can open. His tongue can loosen. Whether through words or gestures, the Spirit moves through the ideas of God. He confirms the truth with power. If you tell a man, "Jesus is Lord, and he heals," and as the Spirit honors the truth at that moment, he may heal instantly. Or you may lay hands on him in the name of Jesus Christ, and the power will come.

So we must spread ideas of faith. Our charge is to multiply the truth of God into as many minds as possible, in as many ways as possible. The goal is not just circulation, but saturation. I want to put this idea into you: the Holy Spirit works through the mind that holds God's thoughts. Power flows when the word of God is confessed and transmitted with faith. When that happens, the power of heaven acts on the earth. The weak become strong. The sick become healed. The bound are set free.

I believe there is power in my hands, not because of my hands, but because of the Spirit who dwells in me. I believe there is power in my voice, not because of my voice, but because of the truth it speaks in faith. I believe there is power in my prayers, because of the authority of Jesus Christ. And I believe there is power in my writings, because they carry thoughts from God, and when those thoughts reach the mind of another by the work of the Spirit, a spiritual explosion occurs. There is power in God's word and his Spirit. And when they converge through a faithful witness, the result is power from heaven.

You have received Jesus Christ. You are born of God. But now receive the Spirit. Receive the power and become a witness. Speak what God has said. Command what God has promised. Write what God has revealed. And expect the power of the Spirit to meet the ideas of God and do what man cannot do.

Prayer: A Different Approach

"Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:24)

Prayer is often misunderstood. For many, it is a desperate attempt to wrestle blessings out of a reluctant God, as if the Father must be persuaded or cornered into giving what he would rather withhold. But this is not how Scripture teaches us to approach him. This is not how Christ revealed the heart of God. We must abandon the faithless instinct that casts God as resistant. Instead, we must understand that the desire for healing, success, and prosperity does not begin with man. It begins with God.

He is the one who first declared himself healer. He is the one who said he gives the power to get wealth. He is the one who makes great the name of the one he favors. God introduced these concepts before man ever formed a request. Healing is not man's idea. Prosperity is not a human innovation. They are gifts that God conceived and promised. Therefore, the man of faith does not say, "God, I want to be healed, please accommodate me." Instead, he can say, "Father, you want me to be healed. You desire to renew my body and fill me with strength. I agree, and I accept." This is the confession of faith.

This changes everything. Prayer is no longer pleading for mercy as if approaching a reluctant master. It becomes agreement with the Creator. It becomes acceptance of the good things that God promises. The man does not try to seize something God withholds. He does not imagine that God is tightfisted. He says, "Father, you want me to be healed. You want me to be successful. You want me to increase in power and influence. I accept it, and I disallow anything contrary." He does not pray as if God is his enemy, but as if God is on his side and desires his well-being.

Jesus taught us to pray with certainty. He said, "Ask, and it will be given to you," and "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it." He did not teach us to say, "If it is your will," when we want something from God. In fact, he revealed God's will so plainly that such uncertainty is now rebellion. When the Bible has already spoken, hesitation is disobedience. The man of faith does not say, "Father, heal me, if it is your will." That is unbelief, disguised as submission. He says, "Father, you want me to be healed. I accept." And the healing comes.

God wants to give more than you want to receive. He is the one who prepared the blessing and created the very categories of increase and fullness. He designed you for success and planned your purpose. When you pray, you are not twisting his arm. You are affirming and accepting his desires. You are claiming what he put in place. This is why Jesus said, "Whatever you ask," and not "Whatever you beg." He said, "Whatever you ask," and not "Whatever you pry from his grip." God is not hiding his blessing. He has made it public and set it in the open.

Defeatism is ungodly. There is nothing righteous about sickness, poverty, or failure. These are effects of unbelief, ignorance, and submission to circumstances. They are not spiritual virtues.

God wants his people to be visible and successful. He wants them to shine as a light on a hill, to attract and guide many to Jesus Christ. He wants his people to have influence. You do not need to convince him to make you great. He has already planned it. You only need to accept it by faith.

Prayer begins with confidence. It approaches God as the giver, not the withholder. The Father has arranged your victory. He delights in your healing and prosperity. He calls you to visibility and influence. Accept this. Pray from this knowledge. Speak as one who walks with his Father. Affirm his intention. Say, "Father, you want this for me. I accept it. Let everything in me agree with your decision to bless and heal, and to work miracles in my life." This is the kind of prayer that pleases God. It is a different approach, but it is the prayer of faith.

Prayer: Name It and Claim It

Prayer can take the form of a confession that takes hold of what God has made available. Too many have reduced prayer to spiritual groveling, as if God must be coaxed into generosity or persuaded by persistent sorrow. But prayer is not effective because of self-humbling gestures or religious tones. It is effective because of faith. Prayer is effective when it expresses certainty, when it dares to act like God's word is true, and treats God like he is faithful. This is what he expects of us. We pray because God has spoken. We pray with confidence because we know we can have what we want.

Religious people mock the prayer of faith as "name it and claim it." They wish to make it sound crude and simplistic. But even this attempt to discredit prayer carries more truth than the Faithless can handle. For this reason, we ought to bend it to our purpose to increase the offense, and to shut out the Faithless from the riches of God. Name it and claim it is exactly right. If you decide you want something, name it and claim it. Confess it as your own. Say it confidently in prayer and receive it. People mock it for the same reason they mock healing, miracles, and tongues. It is because they do not believe God, and they hate those who do.

Faith confessions are a biblical form of prayer. The idea of speaking what you believe and commanding your desire is central to Scripture. Jesus himself prayed this way. When he cursed the fig tree, he spoke directly to it instead of offering a petition to heaven. When he raised Lazarus, he commanded the dead to come out instead of begging the Father for a miracle. He taught us to do the same. When he told his disciples to move mountains by faith, he told them to speak to it instead of asking God to do it. This is the form of prayer that unnerves faithless religious people. It expresses too much confidence. They prefer to linger in ambiguity and self-pity. But Jesus taught us to pray with certainty. When the critics say this is heretical, they speak from their unbelief.

God condemns the one who questions him, not the one who believes him. When Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, God did not regard it as insolence, but he fulfilled Joshua's words. The words themselves did not cause the miracle, but it happened because God honors faith, and faith knows how to speak. Moses once cried out to God at the edge of the Red Sea, unsure of what to do. But God said, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people to go forward." God demanded the initiative of faith, not worthless tears. He did not want another round of passive petition. He wanted confidence and action from his people.

Most people would rather submit endless requests than take responsibility. They would rather submit to circumstances than admit that God has granted their desires. Faith confessions are a sign of maturity. They show that a man prays as a son, not a beggar. He receives from God instead of trying to persuade him again and again. This is faith and obedience, not presumption. Faith regards the promises of God as settled facts and speaks accordingly.

This is not the only way to pray, but it lines up with the kind of confidence and expectation that knows what you want will indeed happen. Petition is also valid, but even then you must do it

with the same sense of certainty. Faithless requests do not become spiritual just because they sound humble. God is not impressed by your self-deprecation. He is pleased when his children know what they want and ask accordingly. He honors faith when it dares to speak. He expects confidence from those who believe his word.

Prayer: Ask Because You Believe

And he said to them, "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." (Luke 10:2)

Jesus instructed his disciples to pray for something that God already wanted to do. The harvest belonged to God. He was the Lord of it and intended to reap it. Yet he said, "Pray earnestly."

There are some who affirm that we ought to have faith when we pray, but who nevertheless cling to the specific error that faith makes it wrong to ask God for what he already desires to give. But it is silly to think that if God wants to do something, then petition becomes unnecessary or even indicates a lack of faith. The assumption is that faith would simply declare, "I take it" or "I have it." This error arises from a misunderstanding that pits petition and confession against each other, as if they were mutually exclusive rather than complementary expressions of faith.

Scripture never portrays petition itself as faithless. On the contrary, it exalts petitionary prayer as proper and powerful, including when it is based on what God has promised. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." He did not say, "Confess that you have bread." Confession is a valid expression of faith, but Jesus said you could ask. When we ask God to give what he has said he wants to give, this is not unbelief. If we expect to receive because we ask, then it is an expression of faith.

To say, "I receive healing," or "I receive the money I need," is often the right way to speak. These are expressions of faith, and they are forms of prayer. Both confession and petition are valid. Both can be full of faith. The issue is faith, not mechanics. The man who prays, "Lord, provide for me," might have more faith than the man who mindlessly repeats a confession. Faith is the substance. Language is the expression.

It is biblical to ask for miracles. It does not indicate low-level spirituality or immaturity. Jesus said the Father gives good gifts to those who ask. He never rebuked people for asking too much, only for expecting too little. The centurion and the Syrophenician woman were both praised for their faith, and both came asking. One pleaded for a servant, the other for a daughter. Jesus did not turn them away with a lecture about mechanics. Whether we come asking or confessing, God honors courageous and shameless faith.

Prayer is a natural expression of faith. You may petition or confess. You may ask once or repeat. The form becomes less important than the confidence behind it. The power lies in faith that approaches God as a Father who delights in giving, and who desires to be asked. Those who receive from God are those who believe that their requests matter. Faith is not a performance to avoid asking. It is the reason we dare to ask. It is the confidence that God is disposed to act, and that he delights when we call on him to do so.

Asking God for what God wants to give is not redundant. Jesus said the harvest is ready, and then commanded prayer. This means that asking does not presume God's unwillingness. It acknowledges his readiness. So we ask for laborers. We ask for healing. We ask for favor and success. We ask for the conversions of men and women. We ask for things already promised, because faith believes that asking is the way of receiving.

The more we believe God, the more freely we will ask. The more deeply we trust his expressed desires for our well-being, the more naturally we will pray. Faith is not the absence of petition, but the assurance that petition is effectual. When we confess the word of God, we do well. When we ask him to fulfill that word, we also do well. These are not competing methods, but converging streams of faith. And in the day of harvest, the ones who asked for laborers will rejoice with the reapers. Jesus said to pray. So we pray. Not because God is reluctant, but because he is ready. We pray because he wants to give. We pray because we believe.

Prayer: The Name of Jesus

"Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." (John 16:23)

A man may pray all his life and never be heard. Another may speak only once and be answered. This difference does not come from eloquence or merit, but from position and union. Jesus said that we may ask for anything in his name, and he will do it. He also said that in the day of understanding, we would ask him nothing. He meant that the day would come when his disciples would no longer depend on him for clarification, but would themselves possess understanding. The Holy Spirit would illuminate their minds and confirm their identity as those chosen and appointed by the Son. They would not need to inquire, because they would already know. Yet although they would no longer ask him questions, they would continue to petition the Father. Indeed, they would ask more than ever, and they would ask with greater effect. They would ask in the name of Jesus Christ, and they would receive.

Asking in the name of Jesus is more than repeating a phrase. It is to ask as one who follows him. It is to ask as one joined to him and sent by him, and one alive with the same Spirit that raised him from the dead. The name of Jesus is not just a sound that we make when we pray. It is everything he is: his nature, his power, his righteousness, his authority, his appointment as the Christ of God. When a man asks in his name, he does not summon Jesus from afar, nor attempt to enlist him to an outside cause. He prays as one identified with Christ, as one who shares the mind of Christ, as one whose requests emerge from that very union.

When Peter healed the lame man at the temple gate, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Later, he clarified that the man was healed "by faith in his name." The power was not in the vocalization, but in the faith that drew from the person and authority behind it. The name of Jesus produces no effect for a faithless person. But one who walks in faith does not treat the name of Jesus as a mere incantation. This is why the early disciples often experienced miracles even before they spoke the name.

Paul sometimes said, "In the name of Jesus." Sometimes he simply gave the command. Once he embraced a man who fell from a great height and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." And the man rose up. Paul lived and moved in the name of Jesus, so whatever he said expressed that name. Who you are is even more important than what you say. Are you one who represents Jesus, chosen and sent by him? Even if you chant his name constantly – "in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus" – if you do not know him, there will be no effect.

The sons of Sceva once tried to use the name of Jesus "whom Paul preaches" to cast out demons. The demons replied, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" The demons knew the correct Jesus. The men spoke the right words. Yet they had no power. They were beaten and humiliated. They said the name, but they were not joined to the name. The demons knew that the words were right, but the men were false. They did not fear the phrase. They feared the man who belonged to the name. Jesus they knew. Paul they recognized. These

men, they disdained. So the question is not whether you say the name of Jesus, and you ought to say it, but whether Jesus knows you, whether heaven stands behind you.

Paul wrote that we are to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, whether in word or deed. This means to live and act under his authority and in line with his nature. It does not mean to chant a prescribed phrase at every step. To heal in his name does not require saying, "In the name of Jesus, be healed," although this may be said. One may say only, "Be healed" or "Open your eyes." One may say, "Jesus Christ heals you now." One may say nothing at all, but lay hands on the sick and watch them recover. When a Christian preaches, he rarely says, "I am doing this in the name of Jesus," but he does. The Christian creates the context where it is understood that he preaches and represents Jesus Christ. The key is the faith and the position. The name is not a password or a spell. It represents the identity of the Son of God and of the one who believes in him.

Prayer: The Welcome of Faith

It has been said that God does nothing without prayer. This is false. More than false, it is blasphemous. God has acted from eternity. He spoke the universe into existence without an invitation. He chose his people and planned their redemption long before any man drew breath or lifted a voice in prayer. He raised Christ from the dead by his own power. He judged kings and humbled nations whether men prayed or not. He is God. He does as he pleases in the heavens and on the earth. He needs no prayer to act, no man to initiate his will. He is not bound to prayer. But he delights in it. He has ordained that many of his works proceed through it. Not because he must be persuaded, but because he has chosen to work with those who believe him. He does not require prayer to act. He chooses to act through prayer.

This means that prayer is never an attempt to overpower God. It is not a form of spiritual coercion. We are not trying to force his hand or storm his throne. It is not a contest of wills, and we are not stronger than he is. If we could overpower him, we would not need him. And if we were stronger than God, he would not be God at all. The idea that prayer is powerful because it conquers God's reluctance turns prayer into pagan magic. The power of prayer is not in its ability to prevail over God, but in his eagerness to answer the call of faith. Faith does not wrestle a gift out of God's hand. It receives the promises that God is zealous to fulfill. Thus the prayer of faith is not persuasion, but welcome. True prayer does not begin with the desperation of those who fear that God may say no. It begins with the confidence of those who know that, in Christ, God has already said yes.

In prayer, we welcome a God who is willing. He has promised healing, prosperity, wisdom, love, and victory in every aspect of life and faith. Prayer acknowledges and welcomes his kindness. It receives the generosity he has declared. God has made known his desire to save and to bless. He has spoken these things in Christ. When we say, "God, we welcome your healing," we are not asking him to decide whether or not to heal. We are receiving the healing he has guaranteed and accomplished. When we say, "God, we welcome your prosperity," we are taking our place in his abundance. The prayer of faith is an act of welcome, not exertion.

To welcome God in prayer is to express faith in him. It is to say yes to his blessings in Christ Jesus. He has sent the Holy Spirit. He has guaranteed miracles and prophecies. He has made hundreds of promises concerning our success and happiness. We do not need to introduce these ideas to him. They come from him. Our part is to receive. A miracle of healing might take no more effort than to say, "We welcome you to heal this man" or "We welcome you to intervene and remove this cancer." He sent Jesus Christ to carry our sicknesses. He made him a curse so that we would inherit the blessing. When we welcome his healing, or any other blessing, we are welcoming what has been accomplished at the cross. We are placing our confidence in his promise and giving him a clear path to perform his word. We say, "God, we welcome your power here." And he comes. We say, "We welcome your justice in this matter." And he acts.

The Faithless think that prayer is a struggle, as if they wish to earn the answer or feel noble in delay. But this is religious pride, not piety. God never said, "Pray until you collapse." He said, "Ask, and you will receive." He did not say, "Convince me to love you." He said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." He did not say, "Force me to bless you." He said, "I have blessed you in Christ with every spiritual blessing." If God had wanted to make prayer difficult, he would have hidden his promises. But instead, he made them public. He declared them plainly. He said, "Call to me, and I will answer you." Faith welcomes him.

Prayer is the simple, bold welcome of a child who believes his father. It says, "Father, I thank you for your will. I welcome your promise. I receive your word." It does not fumble through formulas or question God's motives. It does not ask for healing with a disclaimer. It does not ask for provision with a tone of shame. It welcomes what God has said. It welcomes all that God can do, and rejoices in everything that God has accomplished. The man who prays like this has no struggle. He triumphs in peace and relaxation, because the flesh counts for nothing. He enters the throne room, not as a beggar, but as a son. He does not need to make a case for the Father's kindness. He stands in it.

This is the true spirit of prayer. It is the welcome of faith, not a struggle or a last resort. It is the language of one who believes that God gives us all that he has and dares to agree with him. It is the amen to the word of God. When we pray, "God, we welcome your grace and power," we are merely resting in what he has begun. And he is glad to finish what he starts.

Prayer: Prepare for Success

Most teachings on prayer prepare us to fail. They wrap their instructions in reverent phrases, but their doctrine is faithless. They tell us to accept disappointment as divine design, to endure sickness as a hidden blessing, and to remain poor as a mark of spiritual maturity. They tell us that prayer is a means of submission, but they do not believe it is a channel for power. In Scripture, when God is with a man, that man becomes extraordinary. When God is with a nation, it prevails. When God is with his prophets, they command fire from heaven and stop the mouths of lions. To say that God is with us is to say that we are destined to win. Anything less insults his character.

Jesus did not teach us to pray in preparation for disappointment. He taught us to pray in preparation for miracles. When he told his disciples to ask, he did not try to lower their expectations. He said that they would receive. He said that whatever they asked in prayer, believing they had received it, it would be theirs. It was a consistent message that followed them through every miracle and commission. When they asked for bread, he multiplied it. When they feared the storm, he calmed it. When they were helpless before a grave, he called the dead man out. Each time, he showed them the glory of God through prayer and faith. And then he turned to them and said, "If you have faith, nothing will be impossible for you."

There is a pattern in the ministry of Jesus that is deliberately repeated in his commands to his followers. When Jesus prayed, things happened. He spoke to the Father as one who expected to be heard. When he lifted his eyes before the tomb of Lazarus, he did not plead for an uncertain outcome. He thanked God for having heard him. Then he called the dead man out. This is the kind of prayer that Jesus demonstrated, and it is the kind of prayer that he taught. He never pointed to the blind man and said, "Pray, but understand that you may remain blind." He never stood beside a paralytic and said, "Ask, but prepare for disappointment." Instead, he spoke, they believed, and they were healed.

Jesus has no interest in forming a community that honors weakness and loss as spiritual ideals. He tells us to believe. He tells us to expect. He does not speak as one who is concerned that we might become too ambitious in our faith. That anxiety belongs to the enemy. There is a voice that attempts to introduce hesitation when we ask for something bold. It questions our motives and condemns our desires. It chides us that wanting things is selfish or unspiritual. But that voice does not sound like Jesus. Jesus is the one who said, "Ask and it will be given to you." He is the one who said, "Nothing shall by any means hurt you." He is the one who said, "If you remember my words, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." The one who encourages bold prayer is Christ. The one who discourages it is Satan.

Jesus' teachings on prayer first produce hope. Before the miracle comes, before anything changes, something shifts inside the person who believes. Hope returns. The man who had accepted his condition begins to imagine change. The mother who feared for her daughter's life sees her healed in her heart before it happens. The addict who once saw no way out suddenly sees a way forward. The depressed man who once saw no future senses light. The poor man

who thought he was trapped begins to envision open doors. Even the sick man who has suffered from birth begins to confess healing as his right.

Jesus speaks plainly. If you ask, you will receive. If you believe, you will see the glory of God. He does not teach us to be cautious, but to be confident and ambitious. He speaks to those who are willing to move from resignation to expectation. And for those who obey him in this, prayer becomes a way of rapid advancement. We are not pleading with a reluctant deity. We are receiving from a willing Father. He has introduced the idea of healing. He has promised success. He has spoken of influence, purpose, and destiny.

When a man learns how to pray as Jesus instructed, he does more than speak words. He adjusts his whole posture toward the future. Prayer becomes the language of someone who has seen a different outcome. It is not an effort to escape reality, but a deliberate step into a greater one. The one who prays this way does not ask questions to delay action. He receives the promises and begins to shape his expectations accordingly. God has committed himself to his people and his kingdom. The one who prays well is the one who prepares to succeed.

To pray as Jesus taught is to expect a favorable outcome. He never invited us to prepare for failure or to cushion our requests with doubt. He taught us to pray from a place of confidence, built on the revelation of God's nature to bless and restore. Prayer is a response to this revelation. It is the act of someone who knows that success has been initiated by heaven, and who now steps forward to receive it. Everything changes when prayer is framed this way. You no longer ask as a matter of religious duty. You ask because you believe. And if you believe, then you prepare for success.

Prayer: Tell Him What You Want

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he gave them a direct instruction. He spoke plainly, offering them wisdom from God. He told them to bring their requests before the Lord. Scripture teaches us to tell God what we want. This is what it means to pray. A man who believes and follows God will ask from him. Those who downplay this have abandoned the biblical way, even while pretending to emphasize prayer.

The apostle said, "Let your requests be made known to God." He made no attempt to impress religious men with a more balanced spirituality. But many religious people object. They warn us against turning prayer into a practice of making requests. They say that prayer is not about "give me." They claim that it is about changing ourselves, praising God, or cultivating inner peace. They speak as if requesting things from God is shallow or selfish, as if it is beneath the dignity of true piety. But this is not piety. It is unbelief dressed as virtue. It is the refusal to believe that God hears and answers. It is the doctrine of men who do not have faith to receive anything in prayer, and who therefore create a theology that explains and justifies their failure. They act as if they are too holy to ask, when in fact they are too faithless to expect.

The Bible does not share their scruples. From beginning to end, it presents prayer as a means of asking God to give, to save, to bless, and to fulfill his word. Abraham pleaded for mercy. Moses asked for signs. Hannah cried for a child. David asked for deliverance. Elijah prayed for fire. The disciples prayed for boldness and miracles. Jesus himself said, "Ask, and you will receive." To make a request in prayer is not some lower form of communion, suitable only for immature believers. It is the very essence of prayer as God has ordained it. And he is pleased with it.

When a man says, "Give me," to God, he does not rob God of glory. He honors God. He shows that he is not trusting in himself to address the situation. He is not asking from men. He is not appealing to the dead or calling on demons. He lifts his voice to the only one he trusts, the one who is able to change circumstances and who is faithful to his promises. He acknowledges God as God, the one with power and integrity, the one who rules the world and keeps his word. This kind of prayer magnifies the character of God more than a thousand hollow hymns or scripted doxologies ever could. It is the voice of a man who believes. And it is the voice God loves to hear.

But faithless religion has become so pretentious that it now seeks to protect the glory of God by silencing faith. It tells us that to ask is impious. It tells us that depending on God is undignified. And so we offer him compliments and empty phrases, but we never truly rely on him. We say he is Lord, but we live as if we are. We say he provides, but we make our own way. We say he is powerful, but we never ask him to demonstrate it. In this way, the religion of man becomes a subtle form of idolatry. It praises God with words, but treats man as god in practice. It praises

God as a gesture, but trusts human strength as a habit. God is merely the mascot in this kind of religion.

The truth is that asking God to do something for you, or to give something to you, is one of the highest forms of praise. It shows that you know who he is. It shows that you are not dealing with an idea or a statue, but with a living Lord. It shows that your praise is not a performance but a confession. You do not call him good because it sounds nice. You call him good because you believe he will do good. You do not call him Father because it is poetic. You call him Father because you know he provides. And you ask. You ask because you believe.

Making requests to God lifts him up. It does not bring him down. It is to proclaim him as the giver, the source, the almighty and the faithful. When you ask him to act, you prove that you are not equal to him. You are his child, and you depend on him. You trust in him, and you build your hope on his word. This makes every word of praise more genuine. You are not a peer offering polite compliments to a fellow deity. You are a follower leaning on his promise, a son clinging to his mercy, a believer counting on his power. You know that he acts. You know that he gives. And you ask. That is worship.

The persistent disparagement against "give me" prayers is disingenuous. It hides its unbelief under a veil of reverence. It tries to sound profound by saying, "Prayer is not about getting what you want, it is about becoming who you should be." But this is the creed of a godless mind. A man who believes will praise and ask. A man who asks will receive. And a man who receives will praise again. This is the logic of faith, and it is the pattern of Scripture. Anything else is superstition.

Out of all the religious systems that insult God, perhaps cessationism is the worst. Atheism rejects him outright. Paganism substitutes him. Satanism curses him. But cessationism claims to believe in him while denying his voice and his power. It says he once acted, but no longer does. It says he once gave, but now withholds. It says he once promised, but now we must reinterpret. It has the vocabulary of faith, but the soul of unbelief. It quotes the word of God, but treats it as a memory. It teaches us to pray, but forbids us to expect anything. If you listen closely, the first syllable of the word "cessationism" is the hiss of the serpent. It speaks as the devil did in Eden: "Did God really say?"

But God has spoken. He has spoken through his prophets, and through his Son. He has revealed himself as the one who answers prayer, the one who gives to those who ask, the one who rewards those who seek him. He is not retired. He is not limited. He is not disarmed. He has not ceased to be God. And he commands us to ask. This is prayer. Let your requests be made known to God. Tell him what you want. Let it be praise from your lips and faith in your heart. That is the kind of prayer he honors. That is the kind of prayer he answers.

From Promise to Experience

A promise is not the same as an experience. A man may hold a legal deed to a piece of land but never set foot on it. A family may inherit a fortune and yet die in poverty, unaware of the wealth that has been transferred to them. So it is with the blessings of God. They are given and announced, but many never possess them. They remain undiscovered or disbelieved. The Scripture does not say that we might receive if God feels inclined, but that we receive by faith. The blessings belong to us because they were promised to us. Yet we only enjoy what we receive, and we receive what we believe.

If God has promised healing, why do some fail to experience it? It is an error to equate divine faithfulness with automatic fulfillment. Healing belongs to the believer, but possession is not passive. The woman with the bent back had been in the synagogue for eighteen years. The man with the withered hand had likely attended many Sabbath services. They were children of the covenant, but they were not walking in the power of the covenant. They were surrounded by religious experts, but none had the faith to lift them. Their condition endured not because God failed, but because faith was absent. And when Jesus came to deliver them, the authorities objected.

The Pharisees responded with contempt, not confusion. They were not merely ignorant, but defiant. They were infuriated that miracles occurred outside their control. They spread false accusations against Christ, and threatened those who believed in him. They enforced compliance with a system that kept the people bound and ashamed. These were not random acts of petty jealousy. They were a coordinated and systemic opposition to truth and power. And it was the religious elite who led the charge. The scholars, the teachers, the leaders of the people, were the very ones who blocked the door to the kingdom and punished anyone who dared to enter.

Jesus regarded these men with scorn. He was not impressed with their titles, and he did not accommodate their traditions. He denounced them as frauds and called them sons of hell. He exposed their hypocrisy and warned his followers to avoid them. The synagogue was the spiritual center of the community, but it had become a prison. The leaders did not teach the truth. They did not preach the promises of God. They had no power to deliver, and they resented anyone who did. The people under their care were not just suffering from disease or poverty. They were under a spiritual regime that actively suppressed faith.

This is exactly what the church has become. It preserves a religious form but rejects the truth. It recites the words of the covenant but denies their relevance. The church has replaced the living promises of God with human heritage and confessions of weakness. When someone rises to speak the word of faith, it reacts like the synagogue. It issues warnings and raises suspicions. It excommunicates the healed and punishes the hopeful. The most hostile forces against God's salvation and deliverance are not atheists, but theologians. They uphold their traditions as more trustworthy than Scripture, and they reinterpret the promises of God through the lens of

their own failure. They do not marvel when miracles happen. They attack and mock. They are the descendants of the ones who condemned Christ and sought his death.

Jesus healed the woman on the Sabbath to restore what had been stolen. She had suffered under their leadership for nearly two decades. He called her a daughter of Abraham, because that was the true description of her position. The covenant was hers. The blessing was hers. But no one helped her experience it. Her healing was a correction of an injustice. The man with the withered hand was not randomly healed. Jesus commanded him to stretch it forth. That act of obedience was the means by which the promise became experience. Had he refused, or had he consulted the religious leaders for their opinion, he would have remained deformed.

What belongs to you in Christ is received by faith. A man may sit beside a feast and starve. A person may live in a palace and freeze if he never kindles the fire. The blessings are near, but they are not imposed. God has declared his word, sealed it by blood, and preached it to the ends of the earth. Faith leads to the experience of these promises. The sovereignty of God is revealed in the certainty of his promises, not in his supposed freedom to contradict them. God does not review each person's case to decide whether to honor what he said. He does not occasionally fulfill his word while breaking it at other times. That would not be sovereignty, but dishonesty. It would make him a liar, which is impossible.

The man who believes receives. The one who does not believe remains in lack. The one who teaches faith spreads life. The one who opposes it spreads death. The church was meant to proclaim the covenant and demonstrate the power of Christ. Yet much of it has become like the old synagogue: resentful of miracles and hostile to faith. It punishes those who believe more than it does, and it warns people away from what Jesus came to give. It does not preach the promises. It does not prepare the people to receive. And when someone begins to experience what belongs to him in Christ, the leaders become angry, just as they were angry with Jesus.

But the promises remain. The covenant has not changed. The cross has secured more than forgiveness. It has secured access. The gospel has spread, and with it the knowledge of the truth. No man today is limited to the theological elite. The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. Do not subjugate yourself to a religious system that Christ would demolish. Do not submit to voices that warn against the very blessings of God. Do not honor teachers who have no answers, no power, and no experience. God's promises belong to us. Let the experience match the inheritance, and let the power of the gospel be seen once again in those who believe.

Renewed Day by Day

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Paul's statement has been disfigured by the very people who claim to uphold the faith. They cite it with a knowing smirk, as if it gives permission to decline. Even those who believe in God's promises of healing use it to explain decline due to old age, as if God himself has declared that physical decay is inevitable. They think Paul was giving a theological rationale for bodily failure, but what they are really doing is confessing death and using Scripture to support it. They take Paul's triumph and turn it into a concession. They take his resurrection life and recast it as slow decay. They misread his words, strip them of their power, and dishonor the gospel of Christ. Paul was not submitting to weakness. He was bearing witness to supernatural endurance.

The Greek structure of the verse is concessive. It means "even if" the outer man is wasting away. He does not say that it is. He does not say that this is expected. He says "even if." It is hypothetical. His real point is the supremacy of spiritual life. Even if the body is attacked, the spirit prevails. Even if the flesh is struck, the inner man is renewed. This is the same logic Jesus used when he said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." The point was not that everyone's body will be destroyed by men, but that the spirit cannot be touched. Paul was speaking in the same way. He was affirming spiritual invincibility, not forecasting inevitable collapse.

Paul was not dying. He was surviving the impossible. In the verses leading up to this, he referred to the things he suffered as the backdrop of his statement. He had suffered more violence than most men can imagine: beatings, stonings, lashes, shipwrecks, hunger, and more. And yet, he was still walking, still preaching, still writing, still healing. His outer man had been assaulted beyond reason, but never extinguished. He said, "We are struck down, but not destroyed." The point of the verse is not that the body crumbles. It is that the body was preserved. The verse does not testify to natural decay. It testifies to supernatural strength. Paul was not withering in quiet dignity. He was demonstrating a level of healing power that most men will never need. His body endured more trauma than ten lifetimes, and yet he remained alive. His survival was not evidence of slow deterioration. It was proof of resurrection power.

Scripture does not teach that decay is inevitable, or that we must surrender to it. Abraham's body was revived by faith. Sarah became youthful and beautiful again. Moses died at one hundred and twenty, but his eyes had not dimmed and his strength was untouched. Caleb said he was as strong at eighty-five as he was at forty. They were demonstrations of what faith can do. The same God who formed the body can renew the body. And he has shown that he is willing to do so. He did it for Abraham and Sarah, for Moses and Caleb, and for Paul. If he did it before, he can do it again. If he did it for them, he can do it for us.

The spirit is untouched by circumstances, but faith also affects the body. The gospel is a message of power for every aspect of our life and our being. God's work in us is literal power. It

renews the spirit. It heals the body. The effect is total. It begins in the spirit, but it does not stop there. It reaches every part of the man. Paul was not making a point about spiritual detachment from bodily pain, or about gritting your teeth while your health fails. We can experience daily empowerment, waking up each day with strength from God to prevail. They tried to kill Paul, but he lived. They broke his body, but it was restored. Each day, he was healed, empowered, and sent again. Even if they wrecked his body, they could not touch his spirit, which is renewed day by day. And for this reason, Jesus said, we need not fear the wrath of men. But God touches both the spirit and the body. The power that kept Paul alive through execution attempts is the same power that works in you. The one who renews the spirit is the same one who heals the flesh.

Prayer and Repetition

Elijah was a man of prayer. He prayed that it would not rain, and it did not. Then he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain. The historical account in Scripture shows that this second prayer was not a single utterance, but a persistent petition, repeated seven times while he kept checking the sky. He had already declared that the drought would end. He had announced that rain was coming. Even so, he still prayed. The answer did not come just because he was speaking for God. It came through intentional, repeated prayer.

This matters because some people say that if you really believe, you only need to pray once, and that if you keep asking, it proves you lack faith. Others make the opposite error, repeating their requests without any real belief that anything will happen. The truth is not in the number of repetitions, but in the source and content of the request. Repeating a prayer can be an expression of faith, or it can be a confession of unbelief. The difference reveals itself in what a person says and what he thinks he is doing.

When many people pray for healing, they include phrases that poison the very thing they ask. They say, "If it is your will, then heal." That sounds pious, but it is unbelief trying to pass as reverence. God has revealed his will through Christ. To say "if it is your will" is to question the clearest demonstration of his nature. It is to deny the cross. Others pray, "God, guide the doctor's hands." I suppose this is better than asking the doctor to guide God's hands, and if you are determined to seek help from the doctor, you should at least pray for God to be involved. But God is the true healer. Some pray, "Give this person endurance through the pain." It is assumed that God would not heal the person. They do not believe in healing, so they offer up an alternative spirituality that turns pain into a sacrament. They do not have faith in their hearts, and their words betray their false doctrine.

Then they say, "Prayer is about submitting to God's will." This is not wrong, but God's will is healing and victory. Submission does not mean passive acceptance of circumstances. It means insisting on what God has declared. When Jesus healed, he was submitting to the Father. When the apostles healed, they were following the commands of Christ. They were not resisting God when they rebuked disease. They were honoring God. They were obeying his will, not disputing it.

The person who prays repeatedly in unbelief is asking for nothing and expecting nothing. He may say the same words every day, but his heart remains in doubt. The man who prays from faith, on the other hand, may also return to God again and again, not because he doubts the promise, but because he presses in until the experience matches the announcement. Like Elijah, he prays again because he believes God hears him, because he believes the miracle will happen. There is a way to repeat a request that comes from true faith. The one who believes continues asking, not to persuade God, but to insist on what he wants. He may ask repeatedly, but he never asks uncertainly.

Elijah kept praying until what he had declared became true. That was not a lack of faith, but the very outworking of faith. It meant he did not give up. If he believed that rain would come, then he had every reason to check the sky after every prayer. He knew the drought would end. This is how prayer behaves when it is rooted in the word of God. It seeks results. The Bible says Elijah was praying to end more than three years of drought. This was a national crisis. He was praying for a miracle that would affect an entire generation. This is another indication that his repetition was not done in unbelief or weakness. His repetition did not reflect doubt, but a supernatural ambition.

Today we ought to pray in the same way. Pray, and keep praying, but ask for something that would shake the world. Ask God to remove the cancer. Ask God to cause the amputated leg to grow back. Ask him to give a person a new heart, a new brain, new lungs, new life. Ask him to reverse the aging in someone you love. And if you truly believe it will happen, then even repeated prayers come from faith. But if the faith erupts in you, you can also command the thing to be done in an instant. Each answer to prayer might not happen the same way, but faith is the constant.

The issue is not whether you repeat your request, but whether you believe it. Faith may say it once or a thousand times. The words may change or remain the same. But when the heart is convinced, the mouth will follow. And the body, the world, the thing being addressed, will eventually respond. Prayer that comes from faith is not empty. It is charged with truth. It pulls from eternity and applies power to the present. Ask, and mean it. Say it again, and mean it. And when faith fills the mouth with command instead of request, that is also the way of Christ, and what you say will happen.

Teach Faith, Not Caution

If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7)

It is unnecessary to surround every statement about prayer with a warning. If a man covets another man's wife, he violates the commandment whether he prays about it or not. He needs to repent. Or if he wishes to murder someone and asks God to help him, that is not a matter of faith. But such examples are not representative of the faithful. They do not define the life of a Christian who remains in the word of God. Yet many teachings about the promises concerning prayer treat these as the starting point. They begin with abuse, and then attempt to explain what remains of the promise. Instead of proclaiming the truth, they try to preempt misuse. This casts aside the word of God and burdens the believer with suspicion, placing him in a worse state than before.

Most Christians are not trying to manipulate God. Most are not asking for wicked things. They are praying for healing, for wisdom, for financial supply, for family and for ministry. These are the cries of the righteous, not greed or malice. These are the kinds of things God commands us to pray for in Scripture. They are the product of minds renewed by the word and stirred by the Spirit. Yet even these prayers are often discouraged or diminished. Teachers tell the believer to be careful, to guard against selfishness, and to moderate his expectations. He is made to feel presumptuous for praying for the very things Scripture teaches. He is told that strong desire is dangerous, and that bold asking needs to be tempered. But the truth is the opposite. These desires are evidence of faith. To restrain them is to resist the work of God in the believer.

The kingdom of God does not advance through doubt. It does not expand through people who are too afraid of themselves. It grows through bold prayer and confident action. The man who prays for success in order to serve more, or who asks for healing so that he may labor again, is not selfish. His petition flows from faith, and his faith pleases God. Even the desire for personal relief is not wrong when it arises from a heart shaped by the word. A man may ask for personal victory or for the salvation of his household, and God is glad to give. These are not lesser requests. They are the very outworking of the gospel in a person's life. To make such a man second-guess his prayer is to introduce oppression where there should be freedom and assurance.

When we mute the faith of the many to protect against the abuse of the few, if abuse is possible in the first place, we commit a kind of injustice. We withhold encouragement from the faithful out of fear that someone might go too far. And what is too far? If a man has faith to move a mountain, let him move it! Instead of building up the church, we weigh it down with caution. Instead of reinforcing what is right, we emphasize what might go wrong. But this is a betrayal of the promise. The ones who are humble, prayerful, and filled with the word are treated as if they are reckless. Meanwhile, the false and disobedient are the ones shaping the rules. This is backwards. It is a theological travesty that punishes the righteous and emboldens the faithless. The church becomes hesitant where it should be decisive.

Caution is not the virtue that many suppose it to be. In some cases, it is wise to examine motives. But when caution becomes the starting point of theology, it disfigures the message. It reorders the emphasis of Scripture and turns promises into warnings. What Jesus gave as a confidence becomes a cause for restraint. What he said to embolden becomes a reason to hold back. When teachers place more attention on avoiding excess than on encouraging faith, they rob the church of its power. They teach to produce fear instead of joy, suspicion instead of liberation. They blunt the edge of the sword and call it safety. But in the battlefield, it is a death sentence.

The only proper foundation for teaching prayer is the command to ask. Jesus said it plainly. He did not pad his words with caveats or soften them for balance. He said that if his words remain in us, we may ask whatever we wish. If we are filled with his words, then our prayers are never presumptuous. He told his disciples that the Father loves to give, and that the one who asks will receive. He did not begin with a lesson on failure or abuse. He did not preach caution before he preached power. In fact, he never said anything about caution in prayer at all. He never expressed any concern that we would go too far, but only that we would not go far enough.

Start by Asking

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. (James 4:2)

James was not describing an obscure situation. He was writing about something common, even instinctive. It was how people scheme, strive, and fight to get what they want. He was confronting those who craved position, influence, wealth, and pleasure, and who pursued these things through worldly patterns of conflict, manipulation, and even murder. They were willing to tear down others to gain what they believed would lift them up. These were not spiritual desires, but that was not the issue. The pursuit was for natural concerns, and the problem was that the motive and method were natural as well.

Yet in the middle of this rebuke, James delivered a statement that stands as a principle: "You do not have because you do not ask." He did not say they failed because their techniques were inefficient. He said they failed because they did not ask. They were striving when they should have been praying. They were contending with each other instead of appealing to God. The contrast is between good and evil methods, and between faith and unbelief. The entire passage is shaped by the difference between those who try to gain by force and those who receive by faith.

The original context condemns those who desire things like money and use malicious or selfish means to obtain them. But the text does not condemn the thing desired. The problem is not the category of things they sought, but the spirit in which they sought them. James did not teach that wanting success and prosperity is evil. He meant that fighting for them like the world does is evil. A man may desire the same things, but not in order to impress others or gain status among the faithless. He may want them to support his family, to enjoy peace and stability, or to create space to serve God more freely. The difference is in the motive and method.

Even if a man seeks something for the sake of ministry, he may still fall into the trap of striving. He may try to advance by networking, by currying favor, or by suppressing perceived competition. Even when he is not malicious, he has become self-reliant. He starts using worldly logic to pursue what he believes is a spiritual goal. And this, too, is failure. It is effort disguised as faith. It is unbelief dressed as responsibility. He begins to look like the very people James was rebuking, even if he believes he is serving a better cause. But the kingdom of God does not grow this way. The life of faith does not begin with a performance. It begins with a prayer.

There is nothing carnal about asking God for money, for healing, or for wisdom. These are not only acceptable, they are expected. We are not forbidden to desire a good life. We are commanded to seek it from the right source and in the right way. A man who believes does not say, "I will take what I need, and God can judge me later." He says, "I will ask for what I need, and God will give it as he promised." This is the posture of faith. It does not begin with effort, but with a request. It does not rise by aggression, but by trust. It expresses confidence in a

generous and faithful God. It does not seize the world by its throat with a cruel and murderous determination.

If our goal is to be seen or admired, or to compete with others for personal glory, then we have already failed. It is the same mentality that unbelievers fall into, and the one that James condemned. Jesus warned that some people pray for the attention it brings them. That is another form of striving. It turns the means of faith into another method of pride. But faith does not begin with public performance. It begins with a man asking for what he needs because he believes God is good.

There is no shame in asking. It is the way forward. It is not a fallback for when striving fails. It is the only starting point that godliness permits. Whether a man wants wisdom or income, healing or favor, the first step is the same. He does not have because he does not ask. He may gain a few things through effort or force, but he earns condemnation along with them. It will bring more striving, more fear, and more destruction. But what God gives through prayer is different. It comes with peace and rest. It results in assurance and salvation.

The world will always strive, even kill, and many will join them. But the man of faith has another path. He has another instinct. He knows that striving is empty and asking is power. He will begin with the one thing the world refuses to do. He will begin with the one thing that separates faith from flesh. When he wants something, he will not kill for it. He will ask for it. And when he asks, he will receive.

Sovereign for More

"Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" (Matthew 20:15)

Jesus told a parable about a master who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day's work, and they entered into the fields. Then he returned at the third hour, and again at the sixth and ninth, each time hiring more workers. Finally, he found others even at the eleventh hour, just before the day ended. When evening came, he called the laborers to receive their wages. To the surprise of all, he paid everyone the same. Those who worked only an hour received a full denarius, just like those who had worked through the heat of the day. The first workers were offended. But the master rebuked them, not for demanding justice, but for accusing him of injustice when he had been more than fair. He reminded them that they had received exactly what was agreed, and that his decision to give more to others was neither their concern nor their loss. He declared his right to do what he pleased with what belonged to him, and exposed their envy for what it was, a complaint against generosity itself.

This parable has often been reduced to a lesson about grace to latecomers, or a warning to the self-righteous. But Jesus used it to illustrate how the kingdom of heaven works. The central figure is the master, and the lesson is in what he does. It is a statement about divine action. The parable teaches how God works in the world, how he treats people, and how he uses his freedom. It reveals the nature of divine sovereignty, not a cold and mechanistic rule, but an active and generous will. The master does not use his freedom to defraud anyone. He does not take from one to give to another. He pays what he promised. He does not alter the terms, reduce the amount, or shift the standard. His justice remains intact. The point is not that the early workers received less than they deserved. They received exactly what they were promised. The point is that others received more than they expected, and more than they earned. The parable does not showcase a breach of contract. It showcases an overflow of kindness.

The first laborers agreed to a denarius, and they received a denarius. There was no lie, no breach, no trick. The master did not move the goalposts or shift the weights. His word remained true, and his standard remained fixed. This is the divine pattern. God does not walk back his promises. His freedom does not introduce uncertainty. His sovereignty is never a license to deceive. When God speaks, his word defines what we are to believe. When he promises, his word establishes the floor, not the ceiling. Divine faithfulness means that no one who trusts him will be put to shame. His power never contradicts his word. It establishes it and performs it. Whatever he has said, he will do. This is the minimum.

But the parable shows that he is free to do more. The master had the right to pay more than he promised. He was not bound to limit himself to the strict terms of an agreement. He could exceed them. He did not rob the first to pay the last. He simply used what he had, and gave generously to those who came later. He did not violate justice. He added mercy. His generosity

was not the reversal of righteousness. It was the expression of it. He gave what he wished, and what he gave was good. He did not use his freedom to diminish the early laborers. He used it to elevate the others.

God is sovereign, but he is not erratic or unstable. He does not revise his word or retract his promise. But he is also not limited to the exact language of what he said. He is free to do more. If he has promised a denarius, he will not give less. But he may choose to give more. His sovereignty means he is never bound by the expectations of men. He is not required to limit himself to our bare interpretation of his promises. His word is certain. What he says will happen. But what he gives may overflow what we had dared to expect.

For this reason, believers should never use God's sovereignty as an excuse to lower their expectations. Many claim that divine sovereignty means we must be cautious and modest when asking or believing. They think it means we cannot be sure of what will happen, even when God has spoken. But the parable shows the opposite. The master's freedom is the reason we should expect more, not less. His right to do what he pleases means he will always fulfill his word, and may choose to give beyond it. His power does not limit his promise. It supports it and surpasses it. If he said he will heal, he will heal. If he said he will provide, he will provide. If he said he will give the Holy Spirit, he will give the Holy Spirit. But his promise does not exhaust his desire. His promise defines the least of what he intends to do.

This has direct implications for redemption. The kingdom of heaven is not given only to the one who started early. It is not reserved for those who labored long under the law, or those who were born into privilege, or those who were part of the original nation. God gives to whom he pleases. He includes the Gentile and the outcast, the latecomer and the unlikely. His grace reaches those who arrive at the eleventh hour, and they receive the same inheritance as those who bore the burden of the day. The parable rebukes those who would grumble at this, as if divine generosity is an insult to their effort. But it also instructs those who believe. It teaches us to think rightly about God. His justice will never fail, and his generosity will never be less than we imagined.

The ones who worked first envied the generosity shown to others. They received what was promised, but their eyes turned bitter when they saw someone else receive the same. This reveals a sickness of the heart. Instead of rejoicing in the master's goodness, they accused him of injustice. Instead of being thankful for what they received, they resented what he gave. This is the posture of those who think like men. But Jesus was revealing the mind of God. The parable calls us to believe in divine faithfulness and divine abundance. It calls us to trust that God will never reduce what he has promised, and that he may increase what we never thought to ask. His sovereignty is not our reason for uncertainty. It is our reason to believe more boldly. The master is just. The master is generous. And he is free to give more. In fact, he is disposed to do so.