

Borders

Volume 5

VINCENT CHEUNG

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As Often As You Eat

Custom often grows until people mistake it for divine law. This has happened with the Lord's Supper. In some traditions there is an assumption that Scripture obligates the church to observe it each time believers gather on the first day of the week. That claim is repeated often enough that it exerts pressure on conscience, but the biblical record does not sustain it. The New Testament sets out the meaning and manner of the Supper in plain terms while leaving the timing to wisdom. When a schedule is elevated to the level of command, tradition replaces God's word.

The foundation of the doctrine lies in the Gospel accounts of institution and in Paul's instruction to the Corinthians. Jesus gave bread and cup as symbols of his body and blood. Believers receive them in remembrance of him and proclaim his death until he comes. The emphasis rests on Jesus himself, while the calendar carries no binding role. Paul strengthens the point with a phrase that addresses frequency: "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This wording leaves timing in the hands of the church under the authority of Christ. The charge is to partake in a worthy manner, not to reach a fixed count.

Some move the discussion by importing John 6:53–57 into the doctrine of the Supper, claiming that it teaches a kind of sacramental feeding, the idea that through the bread and cup one actually feeds on Christ. That reading fails. Jesus spoke to an audience that had no knowledge of any ordinance. His terms differed from those of institution, and the subject of his words was salvation, not the Supper. He pressed the need to hear, to believe, and to come to him. He called himself the bread from heaven to teach that faith in him is true nourishment. To turn this discourse into a lesson on ritual twists its meaning. A metaphor for belief is treated as symbols of remembrance. A sermon on eternal life is reduced to a manual for ritual. From there comes the claim of sacramental feeding, a claim absent from Scripture. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper must be drawn from the texts that establish it. Once this is understood, John 6 can be read for what it is, and the entire construction of sacramental feeding falls away.

Another distortion has attached false expectations to the elements themselves. Teachers across traditions have spoken of a real or spiritual presence in the bread and cup. The terms vary, but the idea persists. But neither the words of institution nor Paul's correction to the Corinthians suggest such a presence. They speak of remembrance and proclamation, not of special powers infused in food. Christ is indeed present with his people. By his Spirit and his word he saves, heals, and strengthens them. The Supper belongs within this framework as a memorial directing faith to his once-for-all sacrifice. When churches invent a presence in the elements, they replace revelation with imagination. When they fix a schedule to preserve that imagination, they deepen the error. The cure is to let Scripture speak for itself and to keep the Supper as Christ gave it.

Another loss has come from shrinking the Supper into tokens. The Gospels present the institution in the midst of a meal. Paul's correction assumes that the gathering provided enough

food to satisfy hunger and even to tempt excess. He told believers to wait for one another and instructed those who were impatient to eat at home. This language does not fit the modern practice of crumbs and tiny cups. The Lord set a table as a sign of fellowship with him and with his people. In Scripture, to share a meal means honor, friendship, and loyalty. The Supper carries that meaning. It places all believers, regardless of background, at the King's table to remember the cost of redemption and to taste the joy of the future banquet. In this setting believers converse with one another, show affection, and give encouragement. When the ordinance is reduced to a ritual moment, the sense of the table and the bond it expresses are obscured. The debate about frequency has overshadowed the substance of the Supper. While churches argue about timing, the meal itself has already been reduced to tokens. When the Supper is restored as a real table, attention returns to recognition, thanksgiving, and shared life in Christ

Paul's warning to the Corinthians addresses the manner of the Supper. He told them that many were weak and sick and that some had died because of their irreverence. The bread and the cup represent Christ's body and blood, so contempt for the symbols is contempt for Christ himself. God acted with severity. Rather than merely standing aside, he struck his people to keep them from final ruin. Paul therefore urged self-examination. Believers must discern the body and approach the table with reverence. The scandal in Corinth was seen in their disorderly conduct, which exposed their broken fellowship with one another and their refusal to treat the symbols with respect. Paul called them to repentance before God so that the Supper would once again bear its true meaning. This concern for recognition and reverence remains vital in every age, whatever the timing of the meal.

The texts that are made to favor a weekly rule lack the authority to establish one. The book of Acts records that disciples gathered on the first day in Troas, but this describes an occasion and offers no command. Paul instructed the Corinthians to set aside a collection on the first day, a practice that suited their situation but leaves churches in other times and places free of a different arrangement. Other passages show daily gatherings. The New Testament provides glimpses into the life of the early church. Those glimpses reveal variety rather than a fixed pattern. Anyone who asserts that God has mandated Sunday gatherings or weekly observance of the Supper bears the burden to prove it by command or necessary inference. That proof does not exist. Scripture never commands the church to meet on Sunday, and it never commands the church to take the Supper each Sunday. The record shows what was done. It does not impose those practices as law.

A text from Hebrews is often misused to enforce attendance. The line about forsaking the assembly is treated as a standing rule. The letter, however, addresses believers under pressure and persecution. It insists that Christ surpasses angels, prophets, priests, and sacrifices. It urges perseverance in trial and warns of judgment for those who turn back. In that setting the writer commands them not to forsake assembling, making the meaning plain: believers must not abandon Christ by withdrawing in fear. The focus rests on Jesus Christ himself, the author and finisher of faith. Fellowship may encourage perseverance, but Christ alone anchors the soul. To use this verse as a threat against those who question their congregation or step away from a

corrupt church misses the point. In some cases separation is the very act of clinging to Christ. That act is an expression of fidelity to Christ, rather than a forsaking of him.

This understanding carries pastoral implications. Congregations may observe the Supper weekly, monthly, or at other intervals. The choice must serve the meaning of the Supper, not the demands of custom. Some may find a weekly rhythm useful if it grows from love of remembrance and fellowship at the Lord's table, but it should arise from love, never from an imagined law. Others may serve well with less frequent observance, so long as the meaning is preserved. In every case the emphasis must remain on recognition of Christ, on proclamation of his death, on the unity of believers, and on the joy of fellowship. Leaders should encourage self-examination, reconciliation where strife exists, and genuine fellowship around the table. They should provide space for a meal that carries the sense of a supper among friends who belong to Christ. Tokens may serve in difficult circumstances, but they should not define the practice.

If someone fears he has sinned by missing the Supper, the answer depends on the reason, not on a calendar rule. Withdrawal to avoid Christ calls for repentance. Withdrawal because of conscience against false teaching may reflect faithfulness. Leaders should not use verses as weapons of control but should direct people to Christ. Their task is not to protect numbers and customs but to strengthen believers in the Lord.

When churches mysticize the elements, they create a craving for constant ritual and then enforce a schedule to supply it. When they reduce the meal to crumbs, they strip it of communal power and then look for meaning in timing. When they misuse the verse in Hebrews, they confuse loyalty to Christ with loyalty to an institution. None of this honors Scripture. The way forward is to return to the passages that establish the Supper, to restore the table as a place of remembrance and fellowship, to read Hebrews for its true message of perseverance in Christ, and to encourage gatherings that build believers in doctrine and love. Preferences must remain preferences, never elevated to the status of law.

Scripture does not place the burden of a weekly rule on the church. What matters is the proclamation of Christ. The Supper must be received in a worthy manner. Believers must love one another. They must also hold firm the confession of hope. The timing of the meal belongs to wisdom and circumstance. Many assemblies have found a weekly pattern helpful. Others follow a different rhythm. In either case the practice stands or falls by whether believers discern the body of Christ, remember his sacrifice with faith, and share genuine fellowship at his table.

Doubt: The Root of Sin

Many today encourage Christians to embrace doubt as if it were part of a healthy faith. Some claim that asking questions is a sign of honesty and growth, and that doubt can even strengthen belief. Others go further, assuring people that God is never offended by their struggles, and that wrestling with uncertainty is itself a spiritual discipline. These sentiments are often presented as pastoral sensitivity or intellectual humility, but the effect is to portray suspicion toward God's word as normal, and even necessary, for maturity. The Bible never grants such approval.

Doubt is the essence of sin. It is not a neutral posture of curiosity but the voice of unbelief directed against the truth of God. It began in the garden when the serpent asked the woman whether God had really spoken. That one question contained the venom that poisoned the world. Murder, adultery, theft, and every other crime grew from that seed. Once the word of God is called into question, nothing remains secure. The commandments fall because the authority that gave them is denied. This is why doubt, in principle, is worse than any particular sin against the law. It strikes not only at obedience but at the very foundation of divine truth. To ask whether God has spoken truthfully is to accuse him of deception. It is an attempt to place his word under judgment, as if man were the standard and God the suspect.

The Bible never encourages this. The Israelites doubted God in the wilderness, and their doubt was the reason they died outside the promised land. James wrote that the doubter is unstable in all his ways and should expect nothing from the Lord. Jesus rebuked his disciples again and again for unbelief. He never described doubt as healthy. He never suggested that suspicion toward the word of God could strengthen faith. He praised those who believed, and he condemned those who demanded a sign due to unbelief. Faith rests on God's word, and doubt rejects it. The two cannot be reconciled.

To reassure people that doubt is safe is to echo the voice of the serpent. It is to repeat the original lie in more gentle tones. Instead of asking whether God has spoken, these teachers say that it is noble to raise questions, even when those questions imply that God may have lied. This posture of doubt is treated as intellectual honesty, but it is the oldest deceit in history. It is the refusal to trust the God who speaks. It is unbelief and rebellion dressed in the language of inquiry.

This does not mean that Christians should fear questions. The truth is unshakable, and Scripture contains the wisdom of God on every matter. If someone raises an objection, we are not afraid to respond. If a skeptic mocks the Bible, we are not afraid to expose his folly. The strength of the word of God is beyond dispute, and no argument can overturn it. The distinction that must be preserved is between answering questions and excusing doubt. To confront a question with the conviction that God has spoken is an act of faith. To treat doubt itself as acceptable is to make room for the serpent in the garden.

The stakes are eternal. Doubt, when carried through to its conclusion, leads to hell. People imagine that only murderers and adulterers are condemned, but those who reject the truth of God's word are condemned all the same. To persist in doubt is to live in unbelief, and unbelief is the sin that separates from Christ. When preachers or teachers encourage doubt, they encourage the very posture that damns the soul. They offer poison with a smile and call it nourishment.

Faith does not begin by questioning God but by receiving his word. It does not treat his promises as uncertain but confesses them as true. The one who believes will stand, and the one who doubts will fall. This is the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture. To exalt doubt as if it were a pathway to deeper faith is to betray the truth. To encourage suspicion toward the word of God is to speak with the voice of Satan. Faith honors God by trusting him absolutely. Anything less is sin.

Evangelism and God's Eagerness to Save

The gospel reveals a God who is eager to save. He shows mercy freely and without reluctance, extending kindness without waiting for human beings to satisfy religious conditions. He calls all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, and he is willing to receive anyone who calls upon the name of Jesus. Evangelism announces this eagerness. It declares that the Father has already run out to meet the sinner who turns to him, rather than presenting salvation as an attempt to persuade a hesitant God.

In every generation the methods of evangelism have been contested. Some argue against the altar call, the sinner's prayer, or other expressions of immediate decision. Their criticisms can raise some valid points, since it is undeniable that many people profess faith without true conversion. There are cases in which words are repeated without understanding, or where emotional impulse takes the place of genuine faith. The existence of false converts is real, and it deserves to be acknowledged.

But the way these critics use this truth exposes something more severe. The reality of false conversions becomes a weapon in their hands against those who labor earnestly to proclaim Christ. What they present as theological concern often functions as an excuse for weak evangelism or complete neglect. Endless warnings about shallow conversions pour from them, yet their ministries yield no conversions at all. From the sidelines they claim to protect the church from error, though in reality they rationalize their own barrenness.

There is irony in this posture. The preachers they denounce may indeed gather some false converts, but they also gather many, many more true converts. They bring multitudes into the kingdom of God, while their critics labor in sterility and then disguise the barrenness as spiritual depth. A method that yields thousands of genuine believers, even with some who later fall away, is preferable to the ministry that yields no believers at all. The critic magnifies the possibility of false faith to conceal his own lack of any fruit, as if zero were a superior outcome to a great harvest mixed with some chaff.

This imbalance is already exposed in the Scriptures. Paul observed that some preached Christ from envy and rivalry, and others from goodwill. He did not defend their motives, but he rejoiced that Christ was proclaimed. The critic today does the opposite. He laments when Christ is preached, and he celebrates when evangelistic fervor is suppressed. He prefers silence to proclamation, emptiness to fruit, because his envy is greater than his zeal for the gospel.

The sinner's prayer is not the problem. To call upon the Lord is the biblical mark of salvation. Scripture says that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. The thief on the cross uttered only "remember me," and Jesus assured him of paradise. To confess that "Jesus is Lord" is sufficient to receive righteousness and salvation. These are short prayers, but they carry eternal significance because they are addressed to Christ himself. Critics who despise the sinner's prayer forget that every true convert is saved by some kind of verbal confession of faith, however brief or simple.

Even more, the Bible uses the very language that many of today's critics reject. Some insist we should never invite a person to ask Jesus into his heart. Yet the Scripture itself says that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, and that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba, Father." To prohibit this way of speaking is not only a false diagnosis of modern evangelism but also a direct contradiction of the gospel. When they condemn the sinner's prayer, they condemn what is legitimate. It is difficult to say which party is the greater offender, the one who prays without meaning it, or the one who teaches against praying at all, but it is plain which one is the more self-righteous and hypocritical.

Some promote a model of seeking in which conversion is seen as a long process of inquiry, prayer, and investigation. It is true that if a person does not immediately grasp the gospel, he should continue to seek rather than give up. There is nothing wrong with ongoing reflection if the mind is not yet convinced. However, to assume that this must be the expected path distorts the gospel. The prodigal son did not wander for years outside the city before the father let him in. The father saw him from a distance and ran to embrace him. In many cases, perhaps even the majority of cases, salvation is immediate, because God is eager to save. The idea of protracted seeking as a norm presents the Father as reluctant to receive his children, when in truth he rushes to meet them.

This eagerness of God exposes another layer of hypocrisy. The elder son in the parable remained in the house but never knew the father's generosity. He resented the feast that celebrated his brother's return. His hardness of heart revealed that he did not understand the father's love, even while he lived in the father's household. This is the picture of many traditional churches. They rebuke the joy of salvation, criticize the feast, and condemn those who rejoice when sinners come home. They think they look like the faithful sons, but their resentment proves they have never tasted the father's grace.

The same dynamic unfolds in the critics of evangelistic methods. They reprimand others for supposedly cheap conversions, but their own rejection of God's generosity shows that perhaps they have never been converted at all. Their hardness of heart against the Father's feast is their own indictment. They speak against altar calls and sinner's prayers, but in truth they despise the reality of God's mercy. They are offended that the feast is open to the prodigal, and they invent doctrines to justify their offense.

Scripture itself offers examples of evangelism that was flawed in method but fruitful in result. Jonah preached reluctantly to Nineveh, delivering only a terse and half-hearted warning. He did not explain the mercy of God, nor did he desire their salvation. Yet the entire city repented, from the king to the lowest servant. Jonah's method was deficient, his attitude corrupt, but God's eagerness to save brought forth mass conversion.

Paul noted in Philippians that some preached Christ from envy and rivalry, trying to afflict him while he was in prison. Their motives were evil, but their message still carried the power of God. Paul rejoiced in their preaching because the gospel was proclaimed, and he knew God

would use it to save. The critics of today resemble the opposite of Paul. He rejoiced that Christ was preached even from impure motives. They mourn when Christ is preached even from sincere motives. His faith saw God's eagerness; their unbelief sees only problems.

These examples reveal the difference between a biblical mind and a hypocritical one. The biblical mind recognizes that imperfect evangelism can still bring forth genuine faith. The hypocritical mind uses imperfections as an excuse to suppress evangelism altogether. God saves despite the weakness of men, because his eagerness outruns their faults.

Religious hypocrisy thrives by reversal. The barren preacher condemns the fruitful one. The self-righteous elder son condemns the prodigal. The critic of evangelism condemns the word of God itself. The pattern repeats across history. Those who produce no converts find satisfaction in condemning those who do, and they imagine that this posture proves their discernment and orthodoxy. But in truth it proves their blindness.

The gospel is not a message of reluctance, nor an invitation to seek endlessly with no assurance of arrival. It is the declaration that God has acted in Jesus Christ to save sinners, and that anyone who calls upon him will be received. To evangelize is to proclaim this eagerness and to summon men into the feast. Those who forbid the sinner's prayer, who oppose calling on Jesus from the heart, who criticize every method that bears fruit, are not guardians of truth but enemies of the gospel. They make their diagnosis sound discerning, but they contradict Scripture and reveal their own unbelief.

Evangelism is not perfected by yielding to their complaints. It is strengthened by refining methods while holding fast to God's eagerness to save. The call of the church is not to suppress zeal but to direct it rightly, so that both message and method honor the gospel. Those who preach Christ, however weakly, are aligned with the Father who runs to meet the prodigal. Those who suppress evangelism, however proudly, resemble the elder son who despised the feast. The real danger is not that some converts fall away, but that critics remain hardened and blind.

The church must therefore condemn the critics themselves. Their hypocrisy is worse than the faults they denounce. They are barren, self-righteous, and hostile to God's word. They distract others from the feast and deny the Father's eagerness to save. Against them the gospel proclaims that Jesus Christ is Lord, that salvation is near, and that God delights to forgive. Whoever calls upon him will be saved, whether by a long prayer or by a cry as brief as "remember me."

For Those Who Believe

The gospel belongs to those who believe. It addresses men as rational agents and calls them to agree with the truth of God. It announces that forgiveness of sins and eternal life have been accomplished in Christ, and it demands that men accept what God has spoken. From the beginning it was never meant to be a vague religious atmosphere or an optional set of ideas that any person may alter or ignore without consequence. It comes as a word of command and promise, and its benefits apply only where it is received in faith.

Faith is the channel by which divine blessing flows, and unbelief shuts the channel entirely. There is no middle ground. A man either believes what God has spoken or he calls God a liar. If he believes, he receives forgiveness, healing, and the Spirit. If he refuses, he remains under wrath, bears his own guilt, and suffers the ruin that follows unbelief. The word of God is not suspended in a neutral realm waiting for human consent to determine its truth. It is already true and effective, and it operates to save those who believe and to harden those who refuse.

Faith itself is no irrational leap. It is agreement with what God has revealed. The one who believes does not set aside reason but exercises it in the highest way by affirming the word of God as the controlling principle of thought and life. The refusal to believe does not display superior wisdom but exposes rebellion. God has revealed himself with sufficient clarity in creation and Scripture. He has spoken through prophets and apostles, and he has made himself known in Jesus Christ. To refuse belief is to suppress what is manifest and to prefer darkness over light.

This also governs our response to critics. Every generation has men who scoff at the word of God, who make a career out of resistance, and who congratulate themselves for unbelief. Their criticisms can be answered, and often we do so. But our aim is not to accommodate their demands as if the truth of God awaited their permission. We answer for the sake of testimony, to expose their contradictions, to remove stumbling blocks from those who are considering belief, and to strengthen the faith of those who already believe. The critic is not the one we must persuade at all costs. He has hardened himself. Our defense of the faith is therefore not a frantic attempt to win over rebels but a steady witness to protect the church and to encourage those whom God is calling.

Because of this, we need not be anxious about those who refuse the gospel. It was never for them in the first place. It does not belong to the man who rejects it, and he cannot rob the believer of its blessings. The gospel will continue to save those who believe and condemn those who refuse. Critics may rage, but their refusal leaves them with nothing. They will not be forgiven, they will not be healed, and they will perish by their own chosen doctrine. Their ideas will consume them, for the fruit of unbelief is destruction. They stumble over the stone of Christ and break themselves against it, while those who believe find it as the cornerstone of eternal life.

This is seen in every aspect of the gospel. Forgiveness is announced to those who believe. Jesus declared that the one who comes to him will not be cast out, but the one who rejects him remains condemned. The believer receives cleansing and reconciliation. The unbeliever has no part in this. He carries his guilt into judgment, and his refusal is the very evidence that seals his condemnation.

The same principle applies to healing. Jesus healed those who came to him in faith. He spoke to those who believed his word, and they received recovery of body and mind. But he did not grant the same to those who refused. In his own town, he did not perform many mighty works because of their unbelief. This was not weakness in him but the outworking of a principle: healing belongs to those who believe, and unbelief cuts a man off from its benefit. Those who accept the word of God experience his power, while those who argue against it remain sick and suffer the outcome of their own teaching.

This is true concerning other promises from God. Faith opens the door; unbelief closes it. The Spirit is given to those who believe. The power of God is experienced by those who receive it. The joy of salvation belongs to those who embrace it. And those who refuse are left with their own thoughts, their own fears, and their own death.

Every man lives by doctrine, whether true or false. The critic who rejects the gospel does not live in a vacuum. He holds to some system of thought, and it governs his life. That system, because it is false, produces corruption, despair, and destruction. It breeds sickness in body and spirit, for it denies the truth of God. On the other hand, the believer lives by the teaching of faith, which produces power, healing, and joy. This is inevitable, because doctrine works itself out in the lives of those who hold it. False doctrine brings ruin; true doctrine brings life.

It is no accident that the church of Christ flourishes where faith is preached and received. Where the word of God is proclaimed in truth, men believe, sins are forgiven, bodies are healed, and lives are renewed. Where unbelief is preached, men wither, their faith shrinks, and they become prey to despair. The contrast is between truth and falsehood, not just different religious customs. A tree is known by its fruit. Faith produces life, unbelief produces death.

There is no neutral ground where the benefits of the gospel can be shared by those who refuse its truth. God does not give forgiveness to the man who calls him a liar. He does not grant healing to the one who mocks his promises. He does not pour out the Spirit on those who despise his Son. To believe is to receive, but to refuse is to perish.

For the believer, this is cause for confidence. We do not depend on the approval of critics, nor do we live in fear of their arguments. Their refusal does not diminish our faith or cancel the promises of God. We enjoy the blessings that come by believing, and we proclaim them openly. For the unbeliever, the message is also clear. Unless he believes, he will remain excluded from every blessing. There is no forgiveness apart from Christ, no healing apart from faith, and no life apart from the gospel.

Gnostic Healing

The earliest enemies of the gospel were those who denied that Christ had come in the flesh. They claimed that the eternal Son could not have entered a body, because matter was beneath divinity. They imagined salvation as a release from the physical realm into a higher spiritual state. These teachers were not simply mistaken; they carried the spirit of antichrist. John wrote that every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit which does not is not from God. He insisted that this error was more than a minor defect. It was the presence of a hostile spirit that corrupted the church and threatened the very essence of the gospel.

For more than fifteen hundred years, theologians have congratulated themselves for defeating Gnosticism. They reserve the term for one of the worst insults in their vocabulary. They use it against anyone who appears to spiritualize the incarnation or the atonement, accusing them of gnostic tendencies. Yet they are guilty of the very thing they condemn. They insist on the incarnation in the flesh, but they deny the healing of the flesh. They declare that Christ came bodily, but they claim that his promises of healing apply only figuratively. They treat his words and miracles as symbols of inward comfort rather than declarations of what he accomplishes in the body. If the ancient heresy denied that Christ entered the flesh, the latter version denies that Christ heals the flesh. Both exhibit the same suspicion: that God is too holy to concern himself with the body, and that it is unworthy of man to expect physical healing from him.

This exposes their hypocrisy. For centuries they have hurled the label of Gnosticism at others whenever they judged a teaching to thin out the bodily reality of the incarnation or the atonement, yet they themselves commit the same treachery with respect to healing. They condemn others for spiritualizing Christ's incarnation, but they spiritualize his healing works as if they were metaphors for inner peace and renewal rather than realities of the body. By their own rule they stand condemned, guilty of the very heresy they claim to have defeated. They style themselves defenders of orthodoxy, but in practice they preserve the spirit of Gnosticism, stripping the promises of God of their physical meaning and effect. The result is a gospel mutilated and confined to the inward realm, a message that never touches human sickness or relieves human pain. They parade their error as orthodoxy, but it is the same philosophy of contempt for the body that animated the ancient heresy.

The testimony of Scripture stands against them. Isaiah announced that the Servant would bear our sicknesses and carry our pains. Matthew applied this directly to Christ's healings. Peter wrote that by his wounds we have been healed. The same passage addresses both the spiritual and physical. The atonement does not merely rescue the soul while leaving the body abandoned. It redeems man in his entirety. The cross addresses the consequence of sin in all its forms, including sickness and death. To separate forgiveness from healing is to sever what God has joined. To reduce healing to metaphor is to follow the same mystical philosophy that denied the incarnation. The gospel is not a collection of symbols but an accomplished reality, and it touches the body as well as the soul.

The apostle commanded his readers to test the spirits. The question was whether the spirit confessed that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. That test still applies, but it also extends to the benefits of Christ's work. We must now ask whether the teaching confesses that Jesus Christ has healed us in the flesh. If the answer is no, then the same antichrist spirit is present. It has changed its form but not its essence. In one age it said that Christ could not come in the flesh. In another it says that Christ will not heal in the flesh. In both cases it denies the extent of God's redemptive work and confines the gospel to the spiritual realm.

This subject demands more than polite exchange or scholarly debate. The ancient church treated Gnosticism as heresy rather than a harmless opinion. The same judgment is required today. Teachers who deny healing stand as antichrists who oppose the work of Christ, not as mistaken brothers. Their message carries the influence of demons rather than the voice of the Spirit. Patience or deference toward them insults the cross. They have already wasted centuries repeating the same error in new terms. The gospel demands rejection of error, drives it into the open for exposure, and pronounces condemnation without indulgence.

At the same time, believers do not need to fear these teachers. John reminded his readers that they had overcome the false prophets, because greater is the Spirit who is in them than the spirits that are in the world. The same assurance holds today. The Holy Spirit testifies in us that the work of Jesus includes healing. He does not only bear witness to forgiveness but also confirms that by the wounds of Christ we are healed. He gives life to the mortal body and demonstrates that redemption is not confined to the spiritual. Against this testimony the voices of unbelief cannot prevail. The Spirit of God in us is greater than the anti-healing demons and teachers that surround us.

The label of Gnosticism belongs to them. They hate the term because it reminds them of one of the most disgraceful errors in church history. Yet it fits their own doctrine more than the targets they accuse. They have become what they despise. They accuse others of spiritualizing, while they themselves strip the promises of God of their bodily reality. They condemn Gnosticism in words, but in practice they promote the same philosophy. They are the modern representatives of the very heresy they claim to oppose.

Knowledge and Judgment

The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (Luke 12:47–48)

A principle runs through all of Scripture and every life. No person is exempt from judgment. Ignorance never cancels guilt, and knowledge never rests as a neutral possession. God punishes unbelief and disobedience, whether a man confesses them or claims he did not know. Punishment comes in degrees, and degrees of knowledge determine degrees of responsibility. Some receive fewer stripes and others many, but all stand condemned who refuse the will of God.

Even when a man lacks knowledge, he remains guilty because his response to God is still rebellion. The servant who lacked knowledge of his master's command acted in a way that deserved punishment. He received fewer stripes, but punishment still came. A man may plead that he never studied theology or never heard the doctrines of faith explained, but he still lives in defiance of God. His conscience testifies to the reality of God, and his refusal to yield stands as rebellion. Judgment falls even on those who lack knowledge, because sin remains present in every case.

The servant who understood his master's will and still refused obedience faced heavier judgment. Knowledge increases guilt because it exposes rebellion more fully. Pharaoh stands as a clear example. He heard the words of God, and each plague confirmed their authority. He knew what was demanded, and the wonders he saw left no room for doubt. As his knowledge increased, his hardness deepened. God hardened him so that revelation and judgment advanced together. His ruin came through revelation rather than apart from it. Knowledge pulled him into greater guilt until the waters closed over him. This reveals that God may grant knowledge as an instrument of condemnation. Revelation uncovers the reprobate heart, and the more it uncovers, the greater the sentence.

This truth explains the effect of the gospel. To those who believe, the message announces life. To those who refuse, it seals their ruin. The same words that bring freedom to the brokenhearted also tighten the unbeliever's chains. Paul wrote that the gospel is the fragrance of life to some and of death to others. No one who hears it remains unchanged. The sinner who believes receives forgiveness, healing, and the Spirit. The sinner who resists becomes more guilty than before, because he has now resisted in the face of God's word. The gospel never leaves a man where it found him. It saves or it condemns, it blesses or it curses, but it never passes by without effect.

This principle confronts the Faithless of our time, especially those who use the name of Christ to resist the power of Christ. Many insist that the gifts have ended, that miracles no longer

belong to the church, and that Jesus no longer heals the sick on demand through faith. They cover their unbelief with traditions and theories, treating them as knowledge though they contradict the word of God. Some grow up in these systems and inherit them as if they were truth. They repeat what they are taught, convinced that history and orthodoxy determine the will of God. They remain in unbelief, and they stand guilty for it. They cannot fully claim ignorance, because they insist that they possess knowledge while continuing to oppose the word of God. Those who are directly confronted with the commands of Christ and the testimonies of miracles, and still fight against them, are even more guilty, because the light they receive is clearer and their rejection more deliberate.

There are millions who have explicit knowledge. They read what the Bible says about faith and healing. Many hear Christians testify that God continues to heal in the name of Jesus. Some even witness miracles with their own eyes. At every level of knowledge they stand guilty. They choose to scorn the truth, to attack those who believe, and to mock those who testify. Many blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They use pulpits, schools, and institutions to suppress the word of God. They harden their congregations against faith, leaving the suffering in misery and sinners with fewer reasons to believe the gospel. They reject the truth in order to defend their theories and traditions. By this they bring upon themselves a guilt far heavier than that of those who remain in ignorance. They are guilty for their own unbelief and also guilty for blocking others from believing. The blood of the sick and the lost rests upon them, and their judgment will exceed that of pagans who never heard the gospel.

God has revealed how he repays such conduct. With the measure a man uses, it will be measured to him. The measure of bitterness poured upon the saints will return upon the heads of their persecutors. The contempt shown to faith will rebound as contempt from God himself. Those who mocked healing will face the memory of every sufferer they forbade to believe. Every tear prolonged by their unbelief will rise up against them. The judgment of Christ is strict because the principle is unbending. To those given much, much is required. Those who knew and suppressed knowledge will suffer worse than those who never knew.

Knowledge is holy. It can be dangerous, but only if you reject it. It calls for faith and obedience. To learn without acting is to increase judgment. A man who studies the promises of God and delays obedience heaps judgment on himself. The one who learns that Christ forgives must confess and receive forgiveness. The one who hears that Christ heals must pray for the sick and expect God to keep his word. The one who reads that the gospel must be preached must open his mouth. Knowledge demands action. To stockpile knowledge while refusing obedience is to invite the most severe punishment.

God commands all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. Refusal is never neutral. A man may say he never received a careful explanation of the doctrine of faith, but creation, conscience, and the witness of Scripture still confront him, and his unbelief leaves him condemned. Another may say he studied and understood, but still chose to resist, and his judgment will be heavier. Every person stands under the same call, and every person must

answer for his response. The one who believes finds mercy. The one who refuses finds wrath. The decisive issue is whether a man responds in faith to the revelation given.

God's word never leaves a man as it found him. It lifts him or condemns him. It heals him or hardens him. It justifies him or multiplies his guilt. Pharaoh learned this as knowledge mounted upon him until the waters drowned him. All generations will learn it when Christ appears and makes plain that every hearing of his word has either brought salvation or confirmed damnation.

Lord, Lord, Have We Not?

On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:22–23)

The words of Jesus are striking because of the examples he chose. He did not speak of men who claimed his name while murdering, stealing, or blaspheming. If he had, there would have been no shock, for the judgment of God on such acts is obvious and expected. Instead he referred to prophecy, exorcism, and miracles. These were things his disciples themselves regarded as holy, things Jesus himself performed, and things he commanded them to continue. He wished to warn his hearers that merely claiming the highest ministries, things regarded as undisputedly godly, does not guarantee acceptance with God. Lawless men may claim to perform them, but they remain strangers to Christ. By this very logic the passage shows that such ministries are regarded as legitimate, and by extension it condemns with even greater severity those who refuse them or oppose them.

Faithless interpreters twist the text to a different conclusion. They treat it as if Jesus meant to put down miracles themselves, or as if this verse were written as a caution against pursuing them. They argue that if people who cast out demons and heal the sick may still be condemned, then miracles are at best unreliable and at worst dangerous. This perversion of Christ's meaning serves their unbelief. It gives them a cover for their refusal to obey his command to heal the sick and work miracles in his name. They use it to exalt their own powerless religion, presenting avoidance as if it were orthodoxy, when in truth it is rebellion. Others use it to slander genuine believers. When they see Christians pray for the sick or confront demonic oppression, they smugly assume these are the sort of people Jesus warned against. By wrenching the verse from its context, they weaponize it against the works that Jesus himself performed and commanded. In all this they contradict the very logic of the passage.

Jesus' reasoning requires that the works mentioned be understood as good. If he had cited murder or theft, everyone would agree that condemnation follows. The point would fall flat under its own triviality. His words would have no force, for the shock depends on the fact that prophecy, exorcism, and miracles are not evil but holy. They are the kinds of works that belong to the kingdom of God. The terror of the passage is precisely that men can seemingly engage in such exalted ministries and still hear him say, "I never knew you." This is why the text cannot be used against miracles. To use it that way is to empty it of meaning.

In fact, the inclusion of these works in the saying demonstrates their legitimacy. Jesus constantly performed miracles of healing, deliverance, and nature. His ministry cannot be narrated without them. He commissioned the twelve to preach and to heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to raise the dead, and to cast out demons. He sent out the seventy with the same charge. At the end he promised that those who believe would lay hands on the sick and drive out demons. Miracles are integral to the kingdom of God, natural effects that the reign of God

breaking into the world. By choosing such works as examples, Jesus shows that they are good, honorable, and divinely authorized.

In his own words, if Jesus drove out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom had come upon them. Deliverance from demonic power was the very mark of God's reign displacing the rule of Satan. He instructed his disciples to continue this ministry as part of their preaching of the gospel. To suggest that he here undermines the practice would be to set him against himself. Instead, the condemnation falls on those who practiced it in his name while living in lawlessness. They used his name without ever submitting to his authority. If such workers are condemned even while seeming to drive out demons, how much worse will it be for those who refuse the ministry altogether, who leave men tormented, or who go further and persecute those who obey Jesus in this matter.

The same logic appears in other forms of ministry. Paul wrote that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, even to make his imprisonment worse. But he did not reject preaching itself. He acknowledged the legitimacy of the work, even if the workers were corrupt, since the message could still reach hearers. In a similar way, false workers can claim to be associated with the ministry of miracles, but this does not refute the works themselves. Jesus never condemned prophecy, healing, or exorcism, but he condemned rebellious people who claim to exercise these ministries in order to appear legitimate.

Consider the implications for those who refuse or oppose miracles. If people who claim to engage in healing and prophecy may still be condemned as false followers, how much worse is the condition of those who never attempted such things, who dismissed them as unimportant, or who mocked them as fraudulent? Worse still is the fate of those who persecute Christians for healing the sick and casting out demons. They do not merely fail to obey Christ, but they set themselves against his example and command. If false followers who at least respect miracle ministry are judged severely, what shall be said of those who refuse miracle ministry altogether?

The warning, then, runs in two directions. On one hand, it warns against presumption. A man may claim to preach the gospel and pray for the sick, but remain a stranger to Christ if he is in fact faithless and disobedient. On the other hand, it warns against unbelief. A faithless man may excuse himself from obedience to Christ's commands, pretending that he is orthodox and approved because he avoids miracles. His refusal is itself rebellion, and his condemnation is all the more certain.

Christians must pursue the ministry of miracles. That is the minimum. Murder, adultery, and theft are obviously wrong, so they do not need to be mentioned in this context. The point is that Jesus demands more than mere appearance. There must be genuine faith and obedience. People must know Christ and walk in his ways. They must not despise or neglect the works he commanded. Healing, deliverance, and miracles belong to the kingdom. To resist them is to condemn Jesus.

Seduced by Failure

The seduction of failure is one of the most destructive errors in religion. To be seduced is to be lured into accepting something that ought to be rejected, and failure has been dressed up as if it were a spiritual achievement. The poor are declared blessed by nature of being poor, the sick are treated as if they are closer to God because of their suffering, and the defeated are assured of divine approval without the need for faith or change. The essence of this seduction is that it grants self-approval while demanding nothing. It is easier to baptize failure with pious slogans than to confront unbelief with God's word.

The attraction of this error is obvious. A man who suffers sickness and poverty does not wish to be told that his problem is unbelief. He does not wish to hear that Christ has already paid for healing, that the Spirit has been poured out to empower, and that faith lays hold of every blessing. To admit this is to admit guilt for neglecting God's promise. It is to acknowledge responsibility for refusing to trust. The seduction of failure offers an escape: instead of repentance, he redefines his misery as sanctity. Sickness becomes a badge of holiness. Poverty becomes a sign of divine favor. Instead of facing his unbelief, he declares it to be God's will.

This is the motive behind faithless doctrines. They are not born from reverence for God but from fear of accountability. They serve to protect the pride of the faithless, who would rather blame God than accuse themselves. If the word of God insists that the believer can receive healing and prosperity by faith, then unbelief has no defense. But if men can twist the doctrine so that failure itself becomes holy, they can sin and still feel righteous. In this way, failure becomes a narcotic. It soothes the conscience, it dulls the pain of guilt, and it excuses the refusal to believe.

The irony is that those who claim to honor God by submitting to failure are in fact dishonoring him. They use his name as the excuse for their unbelief. When sickness lingers, they say, "It is God's will." When poverty reigns, they shrug, "It is God's plan." But the testimony of Christ says otherwise. Jesus did not praise failure. He rebuked unbelief. When the disciples could not heal, his answer was plain: "Because of your unbelief." When men worried about food and clothing, he demanded, "Where is your faith?" When people pressed him for answers, he assured them, "Ask, and it will be given; seek, and you will find." He never sanctified defeat. He never congratulated unbelief. He always directed men to trust God and receive what he had promised.

The pattern of those seduced by failure is circular and self-defeating. They argue, "If I am sick, it must be God's will. And because it is God's will, I am right to remain sick." They reason, "If I am poor, it must be God's plan. And because it is God's plan, I am right to stay poor." They chase their own tail, affirming misery as proof of holiness, and misery in turn reinforcing their doctrine. In this loop, they never escape. They never step out in faith. They never embrace the promise of God that exposes their excuses.

Yet the word of God does not leave his will in obscurity. Jesus revealed it in action and speech. He healed all who came to him. He declared that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him to bring good news to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and recovery of sight to the blind. He insisted that those who seek first the kingdom of God would have every need supplied. He announced abundant life, peace, and joy for those who believe. Sickness and poverty were never exalted. They were confronted, overcome, and driven out by faith in God's power.

Faith produces change. It does not sanctify failure but destroys it. The leper who believed was cleansed. The blind who cried out in faith received sight. The paralytic who obeyed the command rose to walk. Everywhere faith appeared, failure was overturned. The doctrine of sanctified failure produces nothing but stagnation. It teaches people to sit still, to excuse themselves, and to imagine that misery is equal to holiness. It produces only resignation and despair, but disguised as devotion and humility.

Faith does not deny that trials exist, but it denies that they have the final word. Faith reaches upward, laying hold of what God has spoken, and it receives healing and abundance. Seduction by failure bows downward, granting misery the dignity of religion, and it leaves men bound where Christ offers freedom. Faith glorifies God by trusting his promise and displaying his power. Failure-doctrine mocks God by turning his promises into dangers and his blessings into heresies.

To accept the seduction of failure is to deny the word of God. It is to contradict Jesus himself, who never once told a man that sickness was his calling or that poverty was his sanctification. The apostles did not preach that unbelief was holy. They preached that faith saves, heals, and brings the power of the Spirit. The seduction of failure takes the very absence of faith and crowns it as a virtue. It is a cunning and wicked way to avoid obedience: to redefine disobedience as godliness.

The church must reject this lie. It must confront those who sanctify unbelief in the name of Jesus. To excuse failure as God's will is to slander his character and nullify his word. To justify sickness and poverty is to despise the cross of Christ, which secured every blessing. Faith is the only path. God calls men to have faith and to bear fruit in abundance.

The seduction of failure is powerful because it offers an easy way out. It allows a man to approve of himself without doing anything, without changing anything, without believing anything. But the way of Christ demands faith. It demands submission to his command and expectation of his promise. The one who clings to excuses will remain sick, poor, and defeated, but the one who believes will see the glory of God.

God's word calls men upward, not downward. It calls them to success by faith, not failure by excuse. It demands that they abandon the narcotic of sanctified misery and embrace the life that Christ gives. Failure is not holy. Unbelief is not godliness. Faith alone receives the blessing, and faith alone gives honor to God.

Sickness and Entitlement

There is a kind of theology that parades itself as profound when in reality it reeks of privilege and entitlement. It calls sickness a gift. It assures us that disease is a blessing in disguise, a lesson from God, or an opportunity to deepen faith. Its preachers and writers hold up their frailty as a sacred text and invite others to read from their scars. They write books about their paralysis, their cancer, or their long decline, urging others not to waste their sickness. The language is romantic, sentimental, and flattering to the speaker. The world applauds, and money flows.

The problem is not only that they are sick or that they speak about it. The problem is that they call their sickness a gift from God. They imagine that the grace of Jesus is manifested in turning decay into inspiration. They build careers on the ruins of their health, and then demand recognition for their spiritual insight. The stage is prepared, the publishers are eager, and the audience is ready to weep. All of this has the fragrance of piety, but underneath lies a theology that is cruel, dishonest, and poisonous.

In developed nations where medical care is readily available, this kind of doctrine can thrive. The sick are cushioned by healthcare systems, family resources, or church support. Even if confined to a wheelchair, they remain comfortable. Even if they suffer daily pain, they receive medication. Even if their condition prevents normal life, they can still write, publish, and tour. This places them in a position where they can philosophize about their suffering. They have the luxury of turning disease into poetry and their pain into profit.

Now place this doctrine beside the reality of much of the world. In many countries you will not hear from their crippled, blind, and cancer-stricken. They are not writing books. They are not negotiating publishing contracts. They are not traveling to conferences to inspire congregations with their introspective accounts. They are crawling on dust roads, begging for scraps. They are starving in their homes, writhing in pain, dying in silence. They have no platform, no audience, and no chance to redefine their misery as a divine gift. For them, sickness is not a subject for reflection but a daily execution. They vanish, and no one remembers.

What arrogance, then, for the privileged sick to speak as if their experience represented the truth about suffering. They tell us that sickness is a gift, but who are they telling? Do they send their books to the blind beggars in Asia or the crippled children in Africa? Do they imagine their doctrine will change the cries of the dying into hymns of gratitude? Their words would be obscene in such contexts. They preach to those who have insurance, who can afford wheelchairs and hospitals, who can receive sympathy and care. Their message is possible only in societies that shield them from the worst of suffering.

This is why their theology is not humility but entitlement. They have resources that others lack. They are able to use their sickness as a stage because their society supports them while they do so. They profit from their condition, not only financially but socially, by gathering admiration and praise. They present themselves as deeply spiritual and insightful, but what they exhibit is

selfishness disguised as piety. Their sickness becomes a platform to elevate themselves rather than an opportunity to glorify Christ.

Such doctrine is not harmless. It brutalizes the faith. It teaches that Christianity is sentimental and detached, turning unbearable agony into a romantic metaphor. It mocks those who have no voice and no comfort. It insults the grace of God by calling disease a gift. The Bible declares that every good and perfect gift comes from above. Jesus went about healing all who were sick and oppressed. He bore our sicknesses and carried our diseases. He did not tell the leper to embrace his leprosy as a divine lesson. He cleansed him. He did not commend the blind man for cherishing his blindness. He restored his sight. He did not encourage the paralytic to view his immobility as a path to deeper introspection. He told him to rise, take up his bed, and walk.

To call sickness a gift is to make a mockery of the ministry of Christ. It is to portray the works of Satan as the wisdom of God. When disease destroys a body, it is an enemy. When pain torments a man, it is an enemy. When death stalks a family, it is an enemy. Scripture calls death the last enemy, and it is destined to be destroyed. To sanctify the work of the enemy by naming it a gift is to side with the destroyer and to attribute his malice to God. It is to rob people of the real grace of Jesus, which is deliverance, healing, and life.

Those who preach this doctrine do not exalt Christ. They exalt themselves. They use their sickness to secure platforms, to publish books, and to gather applause. They claim that their suffering has been sanctified, but in truth they have corrupted it into a tool for self-advancement. They imagine that their words will strengthen faith, but in fact they make faith look foolish, cold, and heartless. Their teaching tells the world that Christianity finds beauty in misery instead of victory in Christ. This is venom disguised as spirituality.

It is a cruelty to the nameless millions who suffer without comfort, who die without medicine, who are crushed under the weight of their disease. They have no opportunity to reframe their condition. They do not publish essays about their pain. They do not draw crowds to hear them describe the romance of their ruin. They are too busy starving, screaming, or fading into death. When the privileged sick exalt themselves by calling disease a gift, they trample on these forgotten lives. They partner with Satan by profiting from the very destruction that Jesus Christ came to undo.

The Christian response must be different. We do not baptize sickness as a blessing. We confront it as an enemy. We do not dress up decay as poetry. We proclaim the power of God to heal. We do not exalt suffering for its own sake. We exalt Christ, who conquered suffering, disease, and death. The gospel announces that Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and brought life and immortality to light. That is the true grace of God. That is the gift from above.

To preach otherwise is to falsify the message of Christ. To romanticize sickness is to distort the gospel and to make the faith appear cruel and detached. Those who promote this doctrine are the scum of the earth, because they rob people of hope and make merchandise of their pain.

They call themselves profound, but they are shallow. They call themselves spiritual, but they are corrupt. They present themselves as compassionate, but their theology is venom.

The church must renounce this lie. It must refuse to call sickness a gift. It must proclaim the true gift of God, which is life, health, forgiveness, and the power of Jesus Christ. Only then will it cease to appear as callous and detached, and instead stand as what it truly is: the bearer of the message of salvation and healing to the world.

Sub-Satanic Theology

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he appealed to Scripture. The temptation was not an invention of his own imagination but a deliberate quotation from Psalm 91. Satan urged Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, saying that angels would guard him so that he would not strike his foot against a stone. This was a direct application of the psalm, which promises that God's people will be shielded from harm, lifted up by angelic power, and delivered from danger. What is striking is that Satan himself assumed that the promise applied to physical protection. He did not treat the psalm as symbolic of "spiritual" safety. He presented it as literal.

Jesus did not dispute this interpretation. He did not say that Psalm 91 was only about spiritual refuge. He did not suggest that it was an allegory about the soul. Instead, his reply confirmed the psalm's promise while rebuking the attempt to twist it. "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." The promise was real, but it was not to be abused. The Son of God would not leap from a building to demand that the Father prove his faithfulness. Jesus acknowledged the truth of the promise while condemning the distortion of it.

This detail carries immense significance. Even Satan recognized the literal scope of God's promises. He misused it, but he affirmed its basic sense. The protection of God was tangible. Angels would act. The body itself was included in the reach of divine power. Jesus' rebuke was not a correction of the meaning but of the misuse. He did not spiritualize the text. He confirmed it and placed it in its proper context of obedience and trust.

The tragedy is that mainstream Christianity today treats Scripture with less respect than Satan did in that moment. For centuries preachers and theologians have reduced the promises of God to mere metaphors. Where the Bible speaks of healing, they redefine it as the healing of the soul. Where the Bible proclaims prosperity, they redefine it as moral richness or inner contentment. Where the Bible offers protection, they reduce it to some invisible sense of assurance, stripped of physical effect. In short, they do not take the promises at face value. They preemptively deny them before they even consider how to apply them.

This approach goes far beyond error in detail. It represents an entire disposition toward God's word. Instead of acknowledging the text and then twisting it, as Satan did, the Faithless erase its meaning from the start. The promises of redemption are explained away as figures of speech. Miracles are explained away as temporary or symbolic for modern application. Deliverance is explained away as psychological relief. Even eternal life itself is sometimes reduced to metaphor. They strip Scripture of its force, leaving only a shadow of what God declared.

If Satan acknowledged the text more honestly than the Faithless, then their theology has sunk beneath his level. Satan's temptation was wicked, but his quotation of Scripture was accurate in its sense. He was a liar, but he at least affirmed that Psalm 91 promised something real and

material. By contrast, much of historic orthodox theology denies that fact entirely. In this way their doctrine is not merely demonic. It is sub-demonic. It is sub-satanic theology.

The irony cannot be overstated. If Satan himself were to teach in their seminaries, their theology would improve. If he were to write their creeds, the documents would contain more truth than what they currently confess. He would at least retain the literal meaning of promises such as Psalm 91. He would acknowledge that healing refers to the body, that prosperity refers to material abundance, that deliverance refers to actual rescue, and that protection refers to safety in life. He would then twist it toward presumption and rebellion, as he did with Jesus. But he would not delete it altogether. In this sense, Satan would be a more orthodox theologian than most professors who claim to serve the church.

Men who wear the pretentious robes of ministers or the gowns of scholars produce a theology worse than Satan's. Their allegorical systems hollow out the gospel until there is little left but moralism. Their insistence on symbolism guts the promises of their power. Their unbelief parades as sophistication. Beneath all their human learning and all their pulpit performance lies a refusal to accept God's word as it stands.

The problem is not confined to a few promises here and there. It extends to redemption itself. Christ redeemed his people in body and soul. He bore their sicknesses, carried their pains, conquered their poverty, and triumphed over their enemies. His resurrection demonstrates victory over every form of death and defeat. Redemption is more comprehensive than the fall. The curse touched every part of human life, and the cross answers every part and more. To allegorize this is to deny the cross itself. To say that healing is only symbolic, or that prosperity is only spiritual, is to say that Christ's work has no effect in the world he came to save. It is to claim that the curse remains, unbroken and untouched.

Mainstream orthodox theology is worse than satanic. Satan tempted Christ with Scripture but assumed its meaning. The Faithless refuse the meaning altogether. They allegorize redemption until salvation itself becomes little more than a metaphor for religious feeling. They deny the material reach of God's promises and then call their denial faith and humility. In reality, it is unbelief raised to the level of a doctrine. It produces Christians who live powerless lives, excusing their failures as though weakness were holiness. It robs them of victory and blinds them to the riches of Christ.

A theology beneath Satan cannot sustain true faith. It cannot produce confidence in God's promises because it has stripped those promises of their substance. Men remain in bondage, and this doctrine persuades them that bondage is normal. They suffer in sickness, and it tells them the sickness is sanctifying. They endure poverty, and it praises the poverty as godliness. They stumble in defeat, and it proclaims the defeat as divine approval. This is a fraud beneath the level of demons. It is not the gospel.

Consider again the scene in the wilderness. Satan cited Scripture and pressed Jesus to act on it. Jesus replied with Scripture and rebuked the presumption. The exchange assumed that God's

promise was true and powerful. Both acknowledged it, though only one used it rightly. Christian theologians, however, deny it altogether. They would stand beside Jesus and Satan and object, saying, "The psalm never promised protection from stones or falls. It was only a picture of spiritual perseverance." In that moment they would expose themselves as more dishonest with Scripture than Satan himself.

Christians must overturn this corruption and return to God's word as it stands. His promises are not mere figures but living realities. Healing, prosperity, protection, deliverance, victory, and eternal life are not symbols to be admired but blessings to be received. Christ purchased them with his blood. To deny them is to deny him. To allegorize them is to despise the redemption of God. It is to preach and receive another gospel, a gospel that cannot save. Promises that refer to physical blessings in Scripture remain physical in their effects. Even demons admit this. Theology that rejects them is worse than demonic. It is sub-satanic.

The Best Things Last Forever

The phrase “good things never last” has become a common way to explain the fleeting nature of happiness. People say it with a sigh, as if to acknowledge that life always takes back what it gives. Beauty fades, strength weakens, friendships drift apart, and pleasures expire. It is received as wisdom, but in fact it expresses despair. It belongs to a worldview that has no God and no hope, and for that reason it reduces every experience to futility. To believe that good things never last is to live under the shadow of nihilism. It is to imagine that life grants brief moments of delight only to erase them with time, and that the erasure itself is the final word. Such a worldview cannot sustain human dignity or joy. It produces generations of people who wander in disappointment. As they grow older, they become weary, and many descend into depression and suicide.

This is what it means to live without God. When creation is denied, life reduces to an accident. The rejection of redemption leaves suffering without purpose. Eternity cast aside makes death the end. Under such a system, permanence disappears from everything. The human soul still longs for meaning that endures, yet unbelief leaves only decay and fading memory. Men strive for wealth but lose it through ruin or death. They labor for achievements, but the monuments they raise eventually fall. They rely on relationships, which betrayal, distance, and mortality bring to an end. The saying that good things never last becomes a confession that life is ruled by entropy.

It is important to recognize that this despair is not an illusion or a misunderstanding. The unbeliever is correct when he feels the futility of his existence. Apart from Jesus Christ, everything he loves will pass away. He will age and die, and his body will rot in the ground. The family that he treasures will vanish into history. The causes to which he dedicates himself will lose momentum, shift in direction, or end in defeat. Even the memory of his life will fade until the world moves on without him. A few names survive in history books, but this is no real comfort, since the people who remember them eventually disappear as well. To live without God is to live under the certainty of loss. The problem with the statement that good things never last is not that it is inaccurate for the unbeliever, but that it leaves him trapped in despair, with no way of escape.

This explains the epidemic of hopelessness in our age. Societies grow richer, more educated, and more technologically advanced, but the rate of suicide remains high. Many are medicated simply to endure the boredom of daily life. They confess that nothing satisfies, and the best pleasures serve only as temporary escapes from misery. The more they gain, the more they discover that they cannot keep it. This is the condition of those who live without Jesus. Their despair is reasonable, for it follows directly from their unbelief.

The Christian faith declares the opposite. It proclaims that the best things do last forever. In Christ, the temporary shadows are replaced by permanent reality. The resurrection of Jesus is the turning point of history because it reveals that decay is not the final law. The grave could not hold him, and the kingdom that he established will never end. Those who belong to him

receive eternal life, and their inheritance cannot be lost or diminished. What unbelievers taste as brief joys that quickly slip away, believers know as glimpses of the eternal life that is theirs in Christ.

This is why Christians can confront suffering with patience and courage. Through Christ they gain victory even in this life, because his power works in them now and in the age to come. The trials of this world may attempt to press upon us, but God continually overturns them with his blessings, and those blessings will reach their full meaning in eternity. Pain loses its authority because Christ has secured triumph over it. Death itself stands disarmed, reduced to a doorway into greater life. The story of the believer is defined by the power of Christ, where victories multiply in the present and joy increases into eternity. Where the unbeliever concludes that everything ends, the believer confesses that in Christ everything continues and endures forever.

Consider the difference this makes for the meaning of love. In a godless worldview, the deepest relationships are doomed to dissolve in death. The most intimate bond, whether in family or friendship, cannot escape the erosion of time. But in Christ, love between believers is anchored in eternity. The unity of the people of God is secured by the life of Jesus himself. It is not subject to decay, but grows toward perfection. What the unbeliever experiences as fragile and temporary, the Christian enjoys as indestructible.

The same holds true for joy. In the world, happiness is fleeting, like a spark that glows for a moment before it dies. It depends on circumstances that shift and fade. In Christ, joy is permanent because it rests on the unchanging promises of God. The source of this joy goes beyond health, wealth, or human approval; it is grounded in the eternal reality of salvation. It is therefore untouched by the changes of the present age. The believer's joy does not fade but grows stronger into eternity.

This permanence defines every aspect of the Christian life. The peace of God is eternal reconciliation, never reduced to a brief reprieve from conflict. The righteousness of the believer is the enduring righteousness of Christ, not a fleeting moment of moral effort. The glory of God surpasses the applause of men, for it is life in his presence and it never fades. Everything that is best is secured, and nothing can take it away.

For the unbeliever, good things never last. For the Christian, the best things last forever. The difference rests entirely on the presence or absence of Christ. He alone abolishes death and brings life and immortality to light. He alone grants eternal meaning to what would otherwise dissolve into futility. The unbeliever lives in despair because his worldview condemns him to loss. The believer lives in hope because his faith unites him to the one who conquered loss.

This truth does more than answer philosophical questions. It reshapes the entire human experience. Without Christ, the world is a place of temporary pleasures that expire in death. With Christ, the world is the beginning of everlasting joy that grows into glory. Without Christ, the only reasonable conclusion is depression and suicide. With Christ, life carries eternal purpose, and even death becomes gain. To believe in him is to exchange despair for hope,

decay for permanence, and futility for fulfillment. For the Christian, the best things in life last forever.

The Church Cannot Save

Christians often exalt corporate religion as if its very structure guaranteed holiness and truth. They imagine that joining a community, participating in its rituals, and aligning with its customs must carry spiritual benefit. In some traditions, they even repeat the maxim that there is no salvation outside the church. This has been the doctrine of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, and it has also been echoed by certain Protestants, especially within Reformed, Anglican, and Lutheran traditions, where salvation is often described as inseparable from the visible church and its ordinances. Such an assertion places the institution at the center of God's plan, as if salvation depended on the church instead of on Christ. It is true that God has given the church for instruction, fellowship, and the exercise of spiritual gifts. But the church in itself saves no one, and corporate religion in itself solves nothing. What matters is the faith of those who come together, and what matters above all is the direct bond between the individual and Christ.

The Pharisees embodied corporate religion. They enforced unity in doctrine and practice, and they surrounded themselves with elaborate systems of worship. But their system was so corrupt that Jesus said they traveled sea and land to make converts and produced children of hell twice as wicked as themselves. He did not regard their corporate form as a sign of strength but as a machinery of condemnation. He exposed it and came to liberate people from its bondage. The presence of an organized religion did not mean the presence of God. In their case, it meant the opposite.

Corporate forms are not necessarily evil, but they are never inherently good. When people unite in unbelief, their combined force often magnifies rebellion. The Tower of Babel shows this. Men gathered in one voice and one purpose, but their unity was against God. The Lord himself declared that nothing they planned would be withheld from them, so he broke them apart. Dispersal was the judgment of God, breaking the power of a unified apostasy. Corporate energy without faith does not bless but destroys.

Reform is not enough when a corporate system has been built on a false foundation. A defective foundation cannot bear a new building. When the wine is new, it requires new wineskins. If men pour it into old skins, the skins burst and the wine is wasted. The attempt to preserve the old form results in greater loss. So with religion: a corrupted institution cannot be salvaged by patchwork or revision. It must be abandoned and left behind. Some within it will never believe, and they will cling to the form until the form itself perishes. Those who trust God must not go down with them. Faith may demand separation. To stand with Christ sometimes requires standing against the crowd.

The slogan that there is no salvation outside the church must be rejected. There is no salvation in the church at all, if by church one means the institution as a community of men. To say that Christ is bound to the church is to make the church greater than Christ. It is to say that the Savior cannot save unless a human organization allows it. Salvation comes only from God through Jesus Christ, and it is received by faith. The church may serve as a place of worship and

instruction, but it does not confer eternal life. Christ alone does this. To insert the church as a condition of salvation is to replace the gospel with a counterfeit.

The history of Israel proves the point. The people followed Moses out of Egypt, passed through the sea, received circumcision, and lived under the covenant. They formed a corporate community, and they even partook of baptism in the cloud and in the sea. But God struck them down in the wilderness because they never believed him. Their corporate identity did not save them. They perished as a group because they rejected his word. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the land, and they did so because they trusted God's promise. They were hated by the community, even threatened with stoning, but God preserved them. Their salvation was not the result of corporate association but of individual faith.

The same principle continues under the new covenant. A person may belong to a congregation, attend its services, and confess its creed, but remain in unbelief and condemnation. Another person may be rejected by the congregation, cast out for trusting God's word against their traditions, and yet be honored by God as his child. The church is not for the purpose of salvation but for the proclamation of salvation. The individual must believe whether he stands with many or stands alone. God can save through the ministry of the church, but he can also save apart from it, and he often works more clearly outside its boundaries when the institution itself becomes hostile to faith. Just as Christ healed outside the synagogue, so he still works directly in the lives of those who believe him, unhindered by religious bureaucracy.

The church, rightly understood, is not designed to hinder but to encourage faith. Its purpose is to teach, to build up, and to provide a fellowship where gifts of the Spirit may serve the good of all. In this sense, corporate gathering is valuable and commanded. But its worth is instrumental, not intrinsic. Its true power lies only in directing individuals to Jesus Christ. Once it substitutes itself for Christ, it becomes an idol. Then it must be resisted. The faithful must be ready to stand alone, confident that salvation comes by Christ himself and not by the multitude.

This does not make corporate spirituality unnecessary. It places it in its proper order. The church exists to serve faith, not to replace it. The gathering exists to magnify Christ, not to eclipse him. A congregation of believers is a blessing when it encourages obedience, but it becomes a curse when it enforces unbelief. Those who have faith must recognize the difference. They must discern whether their participation strengthens or strangles their trust in God. If the community drives them toward Jesus, they should rejoice in it. If it drives them away, they must have peace to stand against it, knowing that eternal life rests not on the approval of the crowd but on the promise of God.

Corporate religion is not better in itself. It can be an instrument of blessing or of ruin. Its value depends entirely on whether it fosters faith in Christ. The decisive matter is always the individual heart before God. Salvation is not mediated through the crowd. It is not found in institutions or rituals. It is found in Jesus Christ alone, received by faith. Whoever believes in him has eternal life, whether embraced by the community or rejected by it. Whoever refuses

him is condemned already, even if he belongs to the most venerable church on earth. This is the truth that humbles human pride and magnifies divine grace.

The Cross of Healing

Jesus told his disciples to take up the cross and follow him. This command is central to Christian discipleship, but its meaning has been corrupted by generations of religious tradition. Many have supposed that to take up the cross means to accept daily hardships, sickness, poverty, and to endure pain as if it were the suffering of Christ. But the word of God never speaks this way. The cross is not sickness. The cross is discipleship. The cross is the cost of obedience to Christ.

When Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, and forgave sins, the world did not applaud him. The rulers slandered him. They accused him of blasphemy, of deception, of madness. They called him a threat to religion and to society. This is the suffering of the cross. He did not suffer because he carried sickness in his own body, but because he brought healing to others. His obedience to the Father brought life, and for this reason the world hated him. The cross was the price of his healing ministry.

In the same way, the apostles never gloried in sickness as if it were their badge of discipleship. They bore the stigma of Christ when they healed the lame, raised the dead, and cast out demons. They were imprisoned, beaten, and killed because they continued the ministry of Jesus. They suffered not for being sick, but for proclaiming and demonstrating healing in the name of Jesus. Their cross was the reproach of aligning with the risen Christ, whose power offended the Faithless.

The distortion that now fills the churches is the inversion of this truth. Christians today suffer for being sick or poor, and they call it a cross. They mistake defeat and bondage for obedience. But sickness is the yoke of Satan. It is submission to the oppressor. To be sick is to suffer for the devil, to exhibit his dominion before the world and the church. To remain in that state and to call it discipleship is to glorify Satan. It is to hold up his oppression as if it were the will of God. This is not the cross of Christ, but the counterfeit cross of unbelief.

The world will never condemn you for carrying this counterfeit cross. On the contrary, it will celebrate you. All kinds of people will join in your suffering, because sickness is common ground for them. The atheist, the Muslim, the Buddhist, and the faithless Christian, if there is such a thing, will sympathize with you. They will admire your patience, comfort you with empty words, and exalt your weakness as if it were strength. They will surround you with praise and solidarity, because in your sickness you align with them against Jesus Christ.

The true cross, however, is different. To take up the cross of Christ is to insist on the ministry of healing, to continue what Jesus began, and to expose the unbelief of the world and the church. When you do this, you will not be applauded but condemned. You will be called a heretic, a fanatic, a deceiver. You will be accused of mysticism, of superstition, of being unscientific, of lacking theological sophistication. They will say you are driven by greed or by lust for comfort. This is the reproach of the cross.

Those who reject the healing ministry refuse to take up the cross. They seek the approval of men. They avoid the shame of being mocked for the doctrine of Christ. They prefer the counterfeit cross of sickness, because it carries no stigma. The true stigma belongs to those who follow Christ in power. It is the disgrace of believing what the world mocks and the false church condemns. To be united with Jesus Christ in his healing is to embrace the cross.

Every disciple must count this cost. If you decide to follow Christ, you must determine ahead of time that you will never retreat from this ministry. You must resolve to stand against the cult of unbelief that fills the churches. These anti-healing sects parade themselves as defenders of the faith, but they are enemies of Christ. They denounce his promises and oppose his power. They would rather honor the devil's yoke than God's deliverance. They must be exposed and condemned. Those who persist in their rebellion will perish in hell.

To take up the cross means to face their hostility. You must accept that they will slander you. They will call you every name they can invent. They will mock your doctrine and scorn your faith. They will take refuge in the applause of the world, while you carry the reproach of Christ. This is the cross you must bear. It is not sickness, but the rejection you endure for standing with Jesus in his healing work.

When Jesus said, "Take up your cross," he called men to follow him in the same path of reproach. He never called them to remain in sickness. He never suggested that disease was obedience. He healed all who came to him, and he commissioned his followers to do the same. To suffer for sickness is to follow the devil, but to suffer for healing is to follow Christ. The cross is the price of loyalty to the ministry of Jesus.

The difference could not be clearer. Jesus did not suffer for being sick, but for bringing healing. The apostles did not suffer for being sick, but for declaring that Christ makes men whole. Christians today suffer for being sick because they have abandoned the ministry of Christ. They glorify the devil's yoke, and the world honors them for it. But those who truly follow Christ will suffer for healing, for preaching what he preached and doing what he did. This is the cross of healing, and this is the mark of true discipleship.

The Insufficiency of Faithless Intelligence

Suppose I hold one hundred dollars, and you need ten for your lunch. If you ask me for five and receive only five, you still lack what you require. My sufficiency does not feed you unless you take from it what is needed. This is the kind of elementary logic that even a child could grasp, and yet faithless preachers and theologians lose themselves in confusion over it. They repeat the slogan that Scripture is sufficient, but they use this as an excuse to contradict what Scripture itself teaches. Their problem is not subtlety or sophistication. Their problem is insufficient intelligence.

The sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible provides everything necessary to teach us the truth of God and to guide us in the way of salvation. The prophets and apostles spoke by divine inspiration, so the written record is complete in its authority and scope. It needs no supplement from the traditions of men, nor does it lack truth that must be supplied by mystical experience or ecclesiastical decrees. In this sense, Scripture is indeed sufficient. The problem arises when people distort the idea. They use it as a blunt weapon to silence the very voice of the Bible.

Those who use the sufficiency of Scripture to cancel the testimony of Scripture only display their own inability to reason. They parade themselves as defenders of orthodoxy, but in truth they expose themselves as intellectually unfit even for the simplest tasks of theology. They imagine they are honoring the Bible when they strip it of its content, as though reverence consisted of repeating a slogan instead of submitting to its teaching. The Bible is sufficient for what the Bible is for. It reveals Christ and teaches faith. To pretend otherwise is stupidity, not learning.

A common distortion appears when the sufficiency of Scripture is used to deny miracles. The argument runs that because Scripture is sufficient, there is no need for miracles today. This reasoning is another example of intellectual collapse. The Bible itself teaches the reality of miracles, the need for them, and the faith that lays hold of them. It is sufficient to show that God fulfills his word with power, that the ministry of Christ and his apostles was filled with miracles, and that believers are promised the same. To use the sufficiency of Scripture as a way of rejecting miracles is to make the Bible insufficient in practice. It teaches one thing, and you use a slogan to forbid what it teaches. If the sufficiency of Scripture means we cannot have what Scripture itself tells us to have, then the doctrine has been turned into a lie.

Consider an illustration. Suppose someone insists that the Ten Commandments are sufficient to provide broad moral guidelines for society. Then imagine that this same person rejects half of them. He declares that he will murder, fornicate, and lie, and when asked why, he answers, "Because the commandments are sufficient." The madness of this answer should be obvious. The commandments are sufficient in themselves, but if you twist them into permission for disobedience, you deny their sufficiency and condemn yourself. But this is the very structure of faithless orthodox theology. It praises the sufficiency of Scripture while using that praise to annul its very teachings.

To confess that Scripture is sufficient is to confess that everything it teaches is true and binding. To confess the sufficiency of Scripture while rejecting what it teaches is to contradict oneself. It is like saying that a lamp is sufficient to give light, but then smashing the lamp and insisting that the darkness proves its sufficiency. The maneuver is not intelligent, and it is not pious. It is the habit of dull minds who prefer slogans and traditions over faith in God.

This wicked distortion of the sufficiency of Scripture pretends to honor Scripture. Many men are skilled in projecting this appearance. They proclaim their loyalty to the Bible, and they contrast themselves with those who appeal to visions or miracles. They appear conservative and biblical to the ignorant. But they are rebels. By silencing what the Bible demands, they turn its sufficiency into insufficiency. They destroy the very thing they claim to protect.

True reverence is to believe what the Bible teaches, to affirm what it affirms, and to obey what it commands. The sufficiency of Scripture never means that miracles are impossible or that obedience is optional. It means that God has given us a sufficient testimony that tells us all these things. Those who reject the testimony have no right to speak of the Bible's sufficiency.

You may cling to empty slogans and call it orthodoxy, or you may believe the word of God and receive what it promises. Those who choose the first prove themselves ignorant, unable to grasp what any child could understand. Those who choose the second will find in Scripture all that it claims to give: truth, life, salvation, and the power of God. Intelligence is measured not by repeating clichés, but by submitting to the teaching of the Bible. To fail here is not a sign of depth or maturity, but of insufficiency, an insufficiency of intelligence.

The Language of Immanence

Christians often emphasize the transcendence of God as if this were the highest way to honor him. They insist that to glorify him we must speak of his exaltation above the world, his eternal nature, and his decrees before time. These truths deserve to be taught, but when they dominate our language, they can leave the impression that God is far removed from us. Then the language of immanence, such as God is here, God acts now, God heals today, sounds out of place or even improper. This neglect is regrettable, because Scripture itself gives abundant testimony to the nearness of God and his direct involvement in the lives of his people. To recover biblical speech and biblical faith, we must learn to speak of God's immanence as readily as we speak of his transcendence.

The testimony of Scripture to divine immanence is overwhelming. Isaiah declared that the high and exalted one who dwells in eternity is also with the contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive them. In Exodus God said he had come down to deliver Israel out of Egypt, and he did so by mighty signs and wonders. Luke records that the power of the Lord was present to heal as Jesus taught, showing that divine presence was both a true doctrine and a tangible reality. Peter told a paralyzed man, "Jesus Christ heals you," a statement of immediate power and presence. After the resurrection, Peter preached that times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord. The early church prayed for God to stretch forth his hand to heal and to perform signs through the name of Jesus. These expressions occur throughout Scripture and form a consistent mode of biblical speech. The prophets, the apostles, and Christ himself all spoke as if God were present and active in their midst, and they expected their hearers to believe it.

God is eternal, infinite, and exalted above creation. He inhabits eternity and exists before the ages. But this same God reveals himself as present in history, in space and time, to bless his people. The two truths stand together as harmonious expressions of the one God. The divine nature is not diminished when he comes near. His greatness is shown in his condescension. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of this. The eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The transcendent God revealed himself in human form, healing, teaching, and dying for our sins. To speak of God's immanence exalts him, for it proclaims that the eternal one who inhabits eternity also reveals his greatness by coming down to us.

Faith is stirred when God is proclaimed as present and active. When preaching says, "God will heal you today," or, "God is here to save," it brings God's reality into the present moment. When prayer asks, "Stretch forth your hand," or, "Let your presence refresh," it is not inventing new phrases but repeating the vocabulary of Scripture. This is the language that builds confidence. By contrast, some preachers misuse doctrines of transcendence and divine sovereignty to tear down faith. They speak of God as distant, arbitrary, or passive, as if his sovereignty were an excuse for inactivity. This is a distortion. God's sovereignty should strengthen faith, because it guarantees that when he acts, nothing can resist him. But for preaching and prayer, the language of immanence should prevail, because it speaks to people where they are and calls them to trust God's immediate presence.

The language of immanence should be the normal mode of expression in most situations, including preaching, prayer, and the instruction of believers. It reflects how Scripture itself speaks. The language of transcendence finds its natural place when we explain the eternal nature of God, when we teach election and predestination, and when we address philosophical questions about his decrees. These truths belong to the system of doctrine and must not be neglected. But when we address the daily life of the church, when we seek to inspire faith, we should speak as the apostles did: "Jesus Christ heals you," "The presence of the Lord is here."

Neglecting divine immanence produces serious consequences. When Christians are taught only in the terms of transcendence, they think of God as remote from their lives. They may confess that he is eternal, but they doubt that he intervenes in their present need. When transcendence is emphasized at the expense of immanence, faith in prayer and miracles lacks the proper context and support. This is a distorted Christianity, because the gospel itself proclaims that God has come near. Christ is Emmanuel, God with us. To rob believers of divine immanence is to rob them of the very heart of the message.

God is eternal, infinite, and exalted. At the same time, he is present, active, and near. These truths are consistent, not opposed. To honor God is not only to speak of his eternity but also to declare his presence. We should gladly affirm that God is here, that God heals, and that God refreshes his people. True worship and ministry exalt him as both eternal and present, infinite and near. This is the language that Scripture gives us, and this is the language that stirs faith.

The Romance of Suffering

The way men speak about suffering reveals how much they have departed from the faith. They dress up their weakness as if it carried some hidden poetry, and they elevate their pain as if it produced virtue. Religion has baptized this error into a doctrine, telling people that their misery is part of a divine romance. The truth is that most suffering is meaningless, and much of it is the direct result of unbelief, sin, or folly. It does not glorify God but blames him, and it does not sanctify the person but deceives him into treasuring his own ruin. There is nothing romantic about this.

Only one man's suffering is romantic. The suffering of Jesus Christ was filled with purpose and power, because it was substitutionary. He suffered for his people, so that they would not have to suffer in the same way. His agony was noble because it was endured to redeem, not to indulge in sentiment. His death was beautiful because it carried eternal meaning, not because it satisfied the melancholy cravings of the human heart. The cross is romance because it joins the highest cost with the highest gift. By contrast, the grief of man is hollow when he treats it as if it were part of the same story.

The attempt to romanticize human suffering is more than an error in taste. It is a theological insult. If the sickness, poverty, or despair that weighs on men is something they are meant to carry for God's glory, then what was the point of Christ carrying it? If the cross means that he bore our sins, our griefs, and our pains, then to embrace them again is to declare his work unnecessary. To hold on to your suffering as if it were sacred is to waste his suffering, because you prefer to treasure your own misery instead of his victory. That is why those who teach people to love their affliction are enemies of the gospel. They encourage believers to find meaning where God has given none, and in doing so they rob the Son of God of the honor due to him.

Most of the suffering that fills the world is not only useless but shameful. A man who commits a crime and is punished for it is not suffering for righteousness but receiving justice. A man who forgets to lock his door and loses his possessions to a thief is not enduring a mysterious trial but paying the price of his carelessness. These things are the fruit of sin and error, not the glory of God. The apostle Peter wrote that if you suffer as a Christian, it is a blessing, but if you suffer as a criminal, it is your own disgrace. He did not tell people to reinterpret their misdeeds as acts of piety. He told them to stop sinning.

The same principle applies to folly. If a person refuses to believe God's word about healing and remains sick, that is not suffering for the glory of God. It is the misery of unbelief. If a person refuses to trust God for daily bread and lives in want, that is not an exalted trial but a self-inflicted prison. Depression is another example. Some Christians read the Puritans and other teachers who romanticized melancholy, and they think their heaviness proves depth of spirit. In reality it proves rebellion. They refuse to believe what God has spoken, they resist his joy, and they prefer to bathe in sorrow as if their despair gave them character. The truth is that they enjoy feeling bad, because it makes them feel profound. In their vanity they become devoted to

their depression, and when anyone points out their unbelief, they turn in accusation. They do not want deliverance. They want to preserve the romance of their own pain.

Jesus told Peter to come, and he walked on the sea toward him. His faith was working, and the miracle was real. But when he looked at the wind and waves, he began to sink. Jesus did not say he misunderstood the redemptive-historical meaning of the statement. He did not say it was about something else. He did not say it was not the will of God for him to walk. He said, "Why did you doubt?" Peter's sinking was not noble. It was failure. If you suffer because of unbelief, your suffering is not romantic. It is disgraceful.

This exposes the foolishness of slogans like "don't waste your suffering." The truth is that suffering is already a waste. There is nothing in it to redeem. What must be guarded against is wasting the suffering of Jesus by preferring your own afflictions to his finished work. To take pride in your wounds is to insult his stripes. To treasure your pain is to ignore his cross. If you love your misery, you are wasting your life on delusions and declaring that his sacrifice was not enough.

The only sensible approach is to curse false suffering, to reject it, and to stand in the victory of Christ. You do not need to accept the sickness he carried. You do not need to embrace the poverty he bore. You do not need to preserve the depression he conquered. To cling to them is to live in unbelief. To resist them is to honor him. Satan comes as a thief, but he can be stopped in the name of Jesus. To treat his theft as a blessing is to side with him against your Lord. To resist him is to live by faith in the Son of God.

The romance of suffering belongs to Jesus Christ alone. His death was where eternal love meets eternal cost, and in him it becomes our salvation. At most, a believer may suffer for him in faith and obedience, whether by persecution or sacrifice for his name. That is romantic, because it is directed toward him. But the majority of suffering that men endure is useless. It comes from sin, unbelief, or foolishness, and it brings neither sanctification nor glory. The church must stop romanticizing such misery. It must stop preaching sermons and writing books that encourage people to see their despair as beautiful. It must start proclaiming the triumph of Christ as the end of such things.

When I had no hope and no friends, I discovered that Jesus died for me. His suffering was the gift that changed everything, and his death was the romance that entered my story. That was the day when misery lost its charm, because I saw that my grief had no beauty in it, but his grief for me was filled with glory. From then on, the question was never whether my depression or poverty or sickness carried meaning, but whether I would believe that he bore them so I could be free. To honor him means to believe him. To believe him means to reject the deception that my suffering is noble. His cross was noble. Mine is useless.

The Seeker-Friendly Gospel of Suffering

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30)

Christ drew a line between his way and the way of faithless religion. He spoke as master and king, calling men to himself with words of rest. His yoke eases the soul because the Spirit supplies strength to bear it. His burden brings life because grace carries it. The call of Jesus creates a life that moves in the power of God, free from the strain of human effort. His authority liberates. His authority heals. The only suffering that accompanies it comes from the resistance of those who hate the gospel.

The believer suffers for Christ when persecution rises. Pain that belongs to discipleship springs from opposition to the gospel and from resistance by faithless religionists. This was the story of Jesus' own life. He healed the sick. He multiplied food. He gave peace to troubled souls. None of those works caused him pain. His wounds came from the hatred of scribes, Pharisees, and rulers who could not tolerate the power of God among them. They resisted the Spirit and turned their fury against the one who carried the power. The same pattern governs those who follow him. The cross on our shoulders is the scorn of unbelief. The stripes on our backs come from persecutors. Sickness, poverty, and broken fellowship belong to the curse from which Christ has redeemed us. They do not define discipleship, because redemption removed them. The life of faith bears reproach from men, not bondage from the curse.

A tired slogan clouds this truth. Many accuse the preaching of faith, healing, and prosperity of being seeker friendly. They claim that ease in the Christian life must mean compromise. This accusation falls apart under scrutiny. If a man cares only for food and clothing and refuses God altogether, then a message that promises food and clothing apart from God would be seeker friendly for him. That would please the flesh while leaving the soul untouched. No preacher delivers such a message. Those most criticized for preaching abundance urge their hearers to seek God more earnestly than their critics do. They insist on the Father's care. They press men to trust his word. Their entire message revolves around seeking God.

The real seeker-friendly message feeds religious pride. It casts suffering as devotion and repackages deprivation as holiness. Sickness becomes a badge of honor, poverty a sign of consecration. This teaching trains people to feel holy through misery and loss, to measure faith by what slips through their hands, and to judge others by how much they surrender. Rather than exalting Christ, it exalts human effort and turns pride into a virtue. It parades endurance in misery as if that were the substance of godliness. In the end, the message builds a stage for man to display his wounds and to call the spectacle faith. This is seeker-friendly religion for the proud, designed to satisfy those who refuse the grace of God.

This spirit repeats the old pattern of the Judaizers. In the days of the apostles they crept into the churches. They watched the liberty of believers and tried to drag them back into bondage. Envy hid beneath their zeal, and fear drove their passion. The sight of men walking free in grace provoked them, so they demanded circumcision and ceremonies as marks of righteousness.

Confidence in the promise they branded as presumption, and liberty in Christ they labeled as lawlessness. They posed as defenders of the faith, but every action undermined it.

The same evil religious spirit moves in our time. It mocks healing and scoffs at prosperity. It scolds believers who expect abundance and shames those who confess the promises of God. Its work is persecution carried out inside the household of faith. The enemies outside hate Christ openly, but these intruders corrupt from within. They wear holiness as a mask while they erode trust in God's word. Their message is friendly to the most destructive seekers of all, men driven by pride who resist the grace of Christ at every turn.

The Lord speaks otherwise. His yoke is easy because the Spirit empowers the believer. The Spirit inscribes the law on the heart and produces obedience. Christ promises a hundredfold in this life. Houses are in that promise. Families are in that promise. Land is in that promise. Restored relationships are in that promise. One shadow remains: persecution comes with it. Yet the shadow falls from outside. The blessings themselves bring joy. They bring stability and fruitfulness. Persecution arises only because the world and the faithless religionist cannot bear the sight of grace at work. They see prosperity as judgment on their poverty. They see healing as exposure of their unbelief. They see faith as proof that they stand condemned. Their rage becomes the only suffering that clings to the believer. Christ makes every other part easy. The Spirit makes every step light. But even then, Jesus said that he has overcome the world.

Christ's voice rises above every distortion. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. Suffering for the believer belongs to persecution for the gospel, never to deprivation that Christ has broken on the cross. To believe this is to walk in liberty and strength. To live by it is to embrace the hundredfold and to accept the reproach that comes with it. Faith receives healing and bears mockery for believing it. Faith receives prosperity and carries ridicule for confessing it. Those who reject the gospel suffer needlessly. They stagger under poverty, sickness, and broken fellowship, and they call it holy. They clutch burdens that Christ has lifted.

The Self-Perpetuating Life Within

The Christian who receives the Holy Spirit after conversion is filled with his presence and power. The Holy Spirit is the eternal, the uncreated life of God, self-generating and self-perpetuating, incapable of depletion. His power depends on nothing outside of himself. He is the source and sustainer of all that exists, and when he comes to live in a person, that person carries within himself the one who has no need of anything to continue.

This means that the life of God in the believer is steady and inexhaustible. It draws no strength from human effort to continue. The Spirit never feeds on us. He is never nourished by our zeal or sustained by our effort. He feeds us. He strengthens and renews us. He is the well that never runs dry, the spring that never ceases to flow. The Spirit in us remains in full measure at all times. His presence is constant and his capacity is infinite.

Because he is God, the Spirit brings with him the very attributes of God. He works alongside us and transforms us. He makes us like God in holiness, wisdom, and power. This is the reality of his work. He shapes our thoughts to reflect the mind of Christ. He produces in us the character that belongs to God alone, such as love, righteousness, faithfulness, and truth. He imparts abilities that come from his own nature, enabling us to do what we could never accomplish by human means.

This is why the coming of the Spirit marks a decisive change in a person's life. When he enters, we are joined to the supernatural, the infinite, and the almighty. This union is complete and real. The Spirit withholds nothing from the one he indwells. He is fully present, fully active, and fully committed to making the believer a living expression of God's own life and works.

To understand this is to see why the gift of the Holy Spirit is beyond comparison. God forgives our sins and gives us a place in his kingdom, and these blessings are great. Yet he goes further. He gives us himself. The Spirit is not an impersonal force or a temporary aid. He is the Lord, the giver of life, dwelling within us to sustain us with the same power by which he sustains the universe. He operates from within so that his life becomes the life by which we live.

Nothing else in creation works this way. Every created thing depends on something else for its existence and strength. Every living thing must be nourished from without. The Spirit alone has life in himself, and he alone can place that life within another. When this happens, the believer becomes a vessel of divine life, upheld by a power that does not diminish, animated by a Spirit who does not grow weary, and shaped into the likeness of the God who gave him.

This is why the apostles could speak of the Spirit's presence as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to his people. All that God had pledged in the covenants and the prophets finds its reality in him. The indwelling Spirit is the guarantee that God will complete his work in us, because his presence is itself the power that accomplishes it. He does what God declares.

To receive the Spirit is therefore to receive the greatest possible gift. Nothing can surpass it, because nothing is greater than God. It is a gift that exceeds human expectation and that continues to confound faithless theology. God places his own self-generating, self-perpetuating life into creatures who once opposed him. It is the highest expression of grace and the surest proof that his purpose for us is more than survival. His purpose is transformation into his likeness.

The believer who understands this will never treat the Spirit as an optional comfort or a marginal influence. He will see that every thought, word, and action should be empowered by the Spirit's wisdom and ability. He will expect that the life of God in him will produce results that can be explained only by God's presence. He will live in confidence and appreciation that the eternal Spirit, the same Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation and raised Jesus from the dead, now lives in him, needing nothing from him to sustain himself, yet giving everything to sustain him.

The Temptation of Sickness

When Jesus was in the wilderness, Satan came to tempt him. One of his temptations was to say, "If you will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" He did not reason with Satan on other grounds. He did not consider whether the offer might serve a greater good. He rejected the suggestion outright, because the word of God had spoken on the matter, and the matter was settled.

This is how faith resists every suggestion that contradicts the word of God. The suggestion may come through a devil, through another person, or through a thought in your own mind. It does not matter how it comes or what form it takes. If it contradicts the word, you reject it. You do not weigh it in your heart to see how it feels. You do not look for signs that the situation might be from God. You do not wait to see what others will say. The word of God is clear, and that ends the discussion.

If Satan tells you to commit sin, you do not consider whether the circumstances might justify it. If he tells you to commit murder, you refuse, because the word says you shall not murder. If he tells you to commit adultery, you refuse, because the word says you shall not commit adultery. If he tells you to steal, you refuse, because the word says you shall not steal. If he tells you to lie, you refuse, because the word says you shall not bear false witness. You do not treat the temptation as a possible assignment from God's sovereign plan. God's sovereignty does not make sin acceptable. God's sovereignty makes his word absolute. And his word tells you to resist sin every time it appears.

The same is true when Satan tells you to accept sickness. He will say, "This is from God to refine you." He will say, "This will bring glory to God if you endure it." He will say, "God has chosen you for this suffering." But the Bible says otherwise. The Bible says that God refines his people by his word. The Bible says that Jesus carried our infirmities and sicknesses. It says that sickness is an oppression from Satan, and that Jesus went about healing all who were oppressed by the devil. It says that the prayer of faith will save the sick. It says that the believer will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

When you are faced with sickness, it does not mean that it is the will of God for you to remain sick. The presence of a temptation does not mean that it is the will of God for you to yield. The presence of a trial does not mean that it is the will of God for you to fail. The presence of sickness does not mean that it is the will of God for you to accept it. If the word of God tells you to receive healing by faith, then the will of God is for you to be healed by faith. The word is more authoritative than the condition you see and feel. It is more certain than the pain in your body. It is more trustworthy than the reports of doctors or the experience of other believers.

When Satan says to accept sickness, you must answer with the word. Say, "No. God's word says that Jesus carried my sicknesses." Say, "No. God's word says that sickness is a curse, and Christ redeemed me from the curse of the law." Say, "No. God's word says that he sent his word and

healed me.” And say, “No. God’s word says that the prayer of faith will heal the sick.” Do not give any ground to the lie. Do not make room for it by calling it a mystery. Never glorify it by calling it a gift. If God’s word calls it an oppression of Satan, then treat it as an oppression of Satan.

Faith resists sickness in the same way it resists sin. Both are contrary to the will of God revealed in Scripture. Both come from the same source of corruption. Both are to be resisted by believing and speaking the word of God. If a person will stand on the word against sin, he must also stand on the word against sickness. If he will confess the word to resist temptation, he must also confess the word to resist disease. If he believes that God commands him to turn from sin, he must believe that God commands him to receive healing.

There are those who think it is safe to accept sickness but dangerous to accept sin. They treat sickness as if it were morally neutral. But the Bible presents sickness as an enemy, not a neutral guest. It came into the world through sin. It is fueled by the same curse that brought death. It is fought by the same power that forgives sin. The same blood that cleanses you from iniquity cleanses you from disease. The same Christ who took away your guilt took away your sickness. The same Spirit who sanctifies your heart gives life to your mortal body.

If you believe that the word of God gives you authority over sin, then believe that it also gives you authority over sickness. When temptation comes, you do not wait to see how long it will last before you resist it. You do not tolerate it for a season to see if it will leave on its own. You resist it immediately, and you resist it until it is gone. You speak the word until the suggestion dies. You set your heart on God’s promise until the pressure lifts. This is how you deal with sickness as well. You do not make peace with it or give it the dignity of a divine assignment. You do not grant it the honor of refining you, but you drive it out by the same faith that drives out sin.

God has made his will known. He has shown his will in the ministry of Jesus, who healed all who came to him. He has confirmed his will in the promises of the gospel, which offer healing to all who believe. He has displayed his will in the nature of redemption, which redeems the whole man, body and soul. He has sealed his will in the cross, where Jesus bore our sins and carried our sicknesses. This will of God does not change when you become sick. The word of God remains, and your faith must stay with it. When sickness tempts you to accept it, answer as Jesus answered in the wilderness: “It is written.” Say what God's word says. Refuse every suggestion that contradicts it. Reject sickness as you reject sin. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

The Way We Speak

The Christian who brings the gospel begins at ease. He experiences no strain. He speaks as one who knows the outcome belongs to God. He carries truth, and he is not burdened by tension. He does not treat the moment as fragile or uncertain, but as an occasion prepared by the Creator. The words he utters were written before time. The person before him was placed by providence. The message arrives with authority. There is no anxiety in him. He remains relaxed because the word governs the result.

This composure grows from knowledge. He understands that faith arises from hearing, that is, hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. He knows that the Father draws, that the Spirit gives life, that the Son receives all whom the Father gives. These truths dissolve pressure and shame. The Christian bears no burden to manufacture faith. His confidence rests in divine causality. This allows him to speak plainly and patiently. He does not measure progress by appearance. His role is to say what God has said.

The conversation may unfold in various ways. Some moments call for explanation, others for sharpness. He reads the situation by recognizing spiritual patterns. He listens for opportunity and receptivity. The gospel moves toward those whom God summons. The believer avoids pretense or entertainment. He steers the conversation toward the truth that saves. He moves past superficial topics and directs the person to ultimate matters.

The Christian speaks of God as the origin and ruler of all. He speaks of man as guilty by nature and by deed. He explains judgment with no restraint or embarrassment. Christ appears at the center, sent from above, crucified under law, raised in power. He lays out the facts in plain terms that leave no room for escape. He announces the necessity of repentance and the promise of forgiveness. The whole message presses the hearer toward a verdict. Each statement moves him closer to acceptance or rejection. Nothing is softened or reduced.

When objections arise, a skillful believer answers as far as the gospel advances. He does not follow distractions into side issues or allow the listener to redefine the terms. He returns each turn of conversation to the truth about Christ and the certainty of judgment. He does not allow the person to shift the topic or lower the stakes. The word of God carries its own force, and the preacher keeps it undisturbed.

When faith appears, the Christian rejoices. He explains that faith expresses itself through confession, worship, and persistence. He points the person to Scripture and its promises. He encourages growth in doctrine and devotion. Faith, he explains, is more than a fleeting decision, but it is the beginning of discipleship. The one who believes receives a new identity and a new purpose.

Where resistance appears, the Christian remains steady, and relaxed. He does not flatter or retreat. The truth has been spoken, and the responsibility rests on the hearer. The believer

feels no regret and makes no revisions. If the person turns away, he leaves the outcome to God. The seed has been sown, and the harvest belongs to the Lord.

By the end, the Christian feels no exhaustion. His strength remains. His words came from knowledge, not effort. He is full of joy because he obeyed. He walks away in peace. What God causes, no one can hinder. What God reveals, no one can silence. The one who preaches the gospel finishes with the same certainty he carried from the start.

You Would Have Given Me Your Eyes

I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an infirmity of the flesh that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my condition was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. Where then is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. (Galatians 4:12-17)

Paul's words in Galatians 4:15 have been twisted and mangled by generations of commentators until they barely resemble the truth. What he meant was not that he suffered from some chronic eye disease or that he carried malaria through Asia Minor as an object lesson in God's refusal to heal. The statement is an idiom, a vivid expression of loyalty, the kind of speech that means "I would give my life for you." The Galatians loved Paul so much that they would have torn out their own eyes for him. That is the point, and to force a diagnosis out of it is to miss the whole truth.

Paul himself explains why he preached to them in the first place: "It was because of an infirmity of the flesh that I first proclaimed the gospel to you." Scholars have lined up to assign ailments such as malaria, epilepsy, ophthalmia, but none of these theories rest on Scripture. The only actual event that matches time, place, and description is already recorded: Paul's stoning at Lystra in Acts 14. He was dragged outside the city and left for dead, a crumpled corpse in the eyes of his enemies. Stoning was not a matter of scratches and bruises. Stones were hurled with intent to crush skulls and cave in faces. Stephen was killed this way. Paul was subjected to the same execution until the mob was satisfied that life had left him. But the next verse records the astonishing fact: he got up and went back into the city. That is the infirmity he speaks of. He lingered in Galatia while recovering from a body that had been shattered, a face that must have looked hideous, a condition that could have been an intolerable trial for those who saw him. But the Galatians did not despise him. They welcomed him as if he were Christ Jesus himself. Their compassion was stirred not by a man with mild fever symptoms but by a mangled preacher, scarred and swollen, who should by all rights have been a corpse.

The text proclaims healing, not sickness. Paul was a walking testimony of survival. He had been left for dead and was still standing. His "infirmity" was the aftermath of execution, not chronic disease. His very presence before them was a miracle, not a medical case study. This reading is the only one anchored in Scripture. It lines up with his catalog of sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11, such as floggings, rods, shipwrecks, dangers, persecutions. It harmonizes with 2 Corinthians 12, where he boasts of "weakness." That thorn in the flesh, like all biblical thorns, refers not to conditions of the body but to hostile persons, a messenger of Satan sent to torment him. His weakness was humiliation and battering, not sickness. The Lord's answer, "My power is made

perfect in weakness," was fulfilled in his very survival, walking out of executions, recovering from lashings that should have killed him, surviving torments that would have destroyed others

To insist that Galatians 4 depicts an eye disease is intellectually incompetent and dishonest. It is the work of Pharisaical scholars who pore over the Bible like bumbling detectives, inventing illnesses so they can soothe their unbelief. They are more diligent in suppressing healing than in proclaiming it. They can sniff out the faintest manuscript variant but cannot connect two clear passages between Acts 14 and Galatians 4. They chase after sickness like pigs after slop, because the testimony of healing rebukes them. They investigate revivals instead of holding them. Instead of healing the sick, they interrogate the ones who are healed. They set traps for those who pray for the sick, just as the Pharisees did when they surrounded Jesus with questions meant to entangle. They have no power, so they mock those who do. But if you do not preach healing, you do not preach Christ. If you preach sickness, you are a liar and an imposter. Most preachers are liars and imposters.

The Galatians could not give Paul their eyes. Their devotion was real, but impotent. But there is One who has given more. Christ gave his life. And by his stripes we are healed. He bore our infirmities, he carried our diseases. Paul's broken body, scarred and deformed by stones, was a living parable of the broken body of Christ. To despise him was to despise Christ. To welcome him was to welcome Christ. To reject the healing testimony in his flesh is to trample the blood of Jesus, who died not only to forgive sins but to heal sickness. Scholars who use Galatians 4 as a proof-text for divine refusal spit on the cross. They forbid others to receive what Christ purchased with his wounds. They pride themselves on erudition while robbing the church of faith.

Paul asks, "Where then is your blessing of me now?" The Galatians once welcomed him as an angel of God, now they treated him as an enemy. Why? Because he told them the truth. False teachers had slipped in with zeal, but it was a zeal to cut them off from Paul, so that they might be zealous for the deceivers. False zeal has not changed. The teachers of unbelief today are zealous for followers, not for Christ. They do not heal, they debate. They do not cast out demons, they investigate footnotes. They do not walk in the power of the Spirit, they sneer at those who do. And their disciples become just like them: powerless, joyless, faithless.

But Paul reminds us how the Galatians first received miracles: not by law, not by works, not by intellectual speculation, but by believing the message. "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" They believed, and miracles flowed. That is the apostolic pattern, the true mark of faith. The same Spirit still works the same way. He does not anoint doctrines of sickness. He does not bless unbelief. He responds to faith in Christ, who bore sickness, carried disease, and heals today.

The passage is not a weapon for unbelief but a witness for healing. Paul was not a sickly apostle dragging his disease from city to city. He was a battered apostle, repeatedly executed, repeatedly raised by God's power, repeatedly made strong in weakness. He walked back into

cities where mobs had left him for dead. He preached while hideous and scarred. He lived as a sign of resurrection power. His testimony is not that God refused to heal, but that God repeatedly healed him from what should have killed him. To reduce this to malaria is an insult. To invent ophthalmia is a fraud. To preach sickness from this text is treachery.

“You would have given me your eyes.” They loved him in his brokenness because they saw Christ in him. We cannot give Paul our eyes, but we can give Christ our faith. And in return, we receive what he purchased: healing, deliverance, and life. This is the true reading of Galatians 4. This is the testimony of Acts 14. And this is the gospel: not sickness endured but healing received, not weakness as defeat but power perfected in weakness. Christ has given us more than his eyes; he has given us his life. Our part is to believe, give thanks, and receive.

When Your Light Is Darkness

Make sure that the light in you is not darkness. (Luke 11:35)

When Jesus spoke these words, he had just given a parable about the eye as the lamp of the body. He explained that when the eye is healthy, the whole body is full of light, but when it is diseased, the body is full of darkness. The illustration draws attention to perception and orientation. The eye determines what enters, and so the state of the eye determines whether a person lives in light or in darkness. By applying this to the soul, Jesus makes the point that a person's moral and spiritual condition depends on whether what he receives and follows is light from God or darkness from sin and falsehood. The critical warning is that people can mistake darkness for light. The danger is not merely the absence of light, but the deception of false light that convinces the soul it can see when in fact it is blind. Jesus urges his hearers to make sure the light they claim is real, because if their supposed enlightenment is actually darkness, then their whole lives are consumed by delusion.

The point becomes sharper when we remember that Jesus spoke in the hearing of the crowds, but in a way that cut straight at the religious leaders who prided themselves on their knowledge of the law and their traditions. They thought themselves enlightened and assumed that others walked in darkness. His rebuke exposed them as blind guides, people whose confidence was their downfall. This is not an abstract principle but a direct attack on the religious establishment that resisted the word of God. The teaching remains relevant, because the same dynamic continues whenever religion elevates its own traditions above revelation and calls darkness light.

From this foundation we can examine the false lights that prevail in much of religion today. The first is the light of orthodoxy. The word suggests correctness, and in itself it could refer to sound doctrine. But in practice it often means the preservation of formulas, systems, and theological identities that are taken as marks of truth apart from the power of God. Many wear the badge of orthodoxy as their light. They point to their confessions, their denominations, and their creeds as proof that they walk in truth. Yet the word of God judges them differently. The supposed light of orthodoxy has become a counterfeit when it replaces direct submission to Scripture. It is one thing to confess the truth, but another to elevate the confession as truth itself. When people cling to orthodoxy while rejecting the faith and power of God, they have embraced a false light that is darkness.

Closely related is the light of the creed. Throughout history, the church has produced creeds and catechisms that summarize doctrine. These can be helpful as tools, but they become dangerous when they are treated as the very substance of divine revelation. Entire systems of thought are now built on allegiance to human documents, and generations have been trained to measure all truth by these human standards. The creed becomes the light, and Scripture is interpreted through its lens. This reverses the order of authority. The gospel is not bound to any creed, and no creed is equal to Scripture. Yet men revere the creed as their light, and in

doing so they have mistaken the darkness of human tradition for the light of divine revelation. The warning of Christ pierces their delusion: make sure that the light you have is not darkness.

Tradition itself is another form of this false light. Religious people are often more devoted to customs than to truth. They preserve rituals, ceremonies, and theological habits with a loyalty that surpasses their devotion to Christ. These traditions, however, are often the very instruments by which the word of God is nullified. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for laying aside the commandments of God to keep their traditions, and the same betrayal continues wherever human customs are exalted above divine revelation. Tradition claims to shine as a guiding light, but it leads men into blindness. To cherish tradition as light is to embrace darkness while convincing oneself of sight.

The diagnosis is severe. What people parade as light is in fact a relic of failure. Each creed that hardens into an idol, each orthodoxy that becomes an end in itself, each tradition that suffocates faith is not a monument to truth but to unbelief. It testifies to the refusal of men to take God at his word. The history of religion is filled with such relics, preserved as if they were treasures, but in reality they record the failures of generations to walk by faith in the power of God. They are museums of defeat, decorated by men who confuse human preservation with divine revelation. To cling to them is to celebrate the very darkness that Jesus warned against.

Even more, such loyalty amounts to spiritual treason. Allegiance to creeds, orthodoxy, and traditions in place of the word of God is a betrayal of Christ. He demands faith in his word, but men pledge themselves to human systems. He calls for obedience to his commands, but they bow to denominational authorities. He shines as the true light, but they prefer the counterfeit lights of their religious heritage. This is treason against the Lord of truth, a transfer of loyalty from Christ to man. To call darkness light in the name of orthodoxy or tradition is to stand against the very Christ who warned against this deception.

Jesus did not present his warning as a suggestion. The responsibility rests on every person to make sure that what he calls light is truly light. The consequences are eternal, because to mistake darkness for light is to live and die in deception. Those who put their confidence in religious orthodoxy, in creeds, and in traditions have constructed a false light that blinds them to the truth of God's word. Their lives may appear religious and their speech may sound pious, but their loyalty is misplaced, and their confidence is condemned.

Jesus alone is the light of the world, and his word alone illuminates the soul with truth. To walk in his light is to receive his word as final authority and to live by faith in his power. This requires a decisive break from the counterfeit lights of tradition and creed. It requires the courage to reject what men call orthodoxy when it contradicts the faith of Scripture. It demands a loyalty to Christ that refuses every rival light. Only in this way can we fulfill the command of Jesus and ensure that the light in us is truly light and not darkness.

When Jesus Saw Their Faith

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:5)

The paralytic’s friends came with a simple and urgent purpose. They carried him to Jesus because they believed he would walk again. They pressed through the crowd, climbed to the roof, and tore it open to lower him before the Lord. Their effort was an expression of belief in his power to heal. They were not there to ask for absolution or to confess sin. They wanted the man restored to health. Yet when Jesus saw their faith, the first thing he said was, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” He addressed what they had not mentioned and gave what they had not requested.

Faith toward Christ is not neatly divisible into separate compartments for forgiveness and healing. The faith that receives one receives the other, because both belong to the same Christ and the same redemption. Those who think they can trust him for the body while doubting him for the soul, or vice versa, misunderstand his identity and his mission. He does not offer a partial gospel. His authority to restore a crippled body is the same authority to cleanse a guilty conscience. To believe in one is to have grounds for the other.

In the case of the paralytic, Jesus chose to declare forgiveness first, and then to heal. He explained to the critics that his words were not blasphemy, but proof of his divine right: “That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” he said to the paralytic, “rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” The physical healing confirmed the spiritual forgiveness, and the spiritual forgiveness was as real as the man standing and walking.

This principle is not confined to that event. The same unity appears in James 5, where the apostle instructs the church to pray for the sick: “The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” The same prayer, the same faith, and the same Lord answer with both healing and forgiveness. There is no suggestion that one might succeed while the other fails. James speaks of them as two effects of the same divine response.

The pattern runs deep in Scripture. Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness when he believed God’s promise of descendants. The immediate object of his belief was not forgiveness but the fulfillment of a word about his natural offspring. Yet God counted that faith as righteousness. Whenever a man believes God’s word, he stands in the posture of justification. The substance of faith is the same: it takes God at his word and relies on his power. In Abraham’s case, the promise was about a son. In the paralytic’s case, the promise was about healing. In both, the faith was unto righteousness, because it was faith in the God who justifies.

This demolishes the artificial division many Christians impose between what they call “saving faith” and “faith for other things.” They speak as if one could trust God for provision,

protection, or healing without touching salvation, or as if one could be forgiven and yet have no confidence in his promises about health and life. Scripture does not present such a divided Christ. There is one Lord, one gospel, one faith. To trust him is to trust him. The object of faith is not an abstract quality but the living person who speaks and acts. If he is believed in one area, the believer has every reason to believe him in every area.

The opposite is also true. To doubt him in what he has clearly promised is unbelief, even if one professes faith in another area. A man who claims to trust Christ for eternal life but refuses to believe his words about healing shows that his trust is selective and inconsistent. This is not the faith that Scripture teaches. God did not treat faith in one promise as if it were unrelated to the rest of his word. To Abraham, he counted belief in the promise of a son as righteousness. To the paralytic, he granted both forgiveness and healing in response to the same faith.

In both Mark 2 and James 5, the link between healing and forgiveness is more than thematic. It is integral in the sense that the same act of faith receives both. This is because both flow from the same work of Christ, who bore our sins and carried our sicknesses. The cross was not an act of partial redemption. When Christ died, he did not only remove guilt. He also broke the power of death and disease. The benefits reach both the soul and the body.

Therefore the church must not preach a Christ who forgives without healing or a Christ who heals without forgiving. It must preach the Christ who saves in full. The man who comes for healing should hear that his sins are forgiven, and the man who comes for forgiveness should know that the same Christ restores his health. To withhold either is to misrepresent the gospel and to betray Jesus Christ.

The scene in Mark 2 is more than a healing story. It is a declaration of Christ's comprehensive authority and the inseparable nature of his blessings. Seeing their faith, he forgave sins. Then he healed the body. Abraham's faith in the promise of a son was counted as righteousness. The same faith brought both healing and forgiveness to the paralytic. The prayer of faith in James 5 brings both. These are not separate gospels or separate graces. They are one salvation in Christ, received by one faith, given by one Lord.

When God Asks for a Sign

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.”

Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:10–14)

The Lord spoke to Ahaz during a moment of crisis. Armies threatened his kingdom, and his throne trembled with fear. Into this scene God sent his prophet with a word of assurance, and to anchor that word he commanded Ahaz to ask for a sign. The scope of the offer stretched from the deepest realm of Sheol to the highest reaches of heaven. Nothing was off limits. Ahaz could have asked for a miracle that shook the earth or displayed the glory of the skies. The God of Israel stood ready to prove his promise with any wonder the king might request.

Instead of receiving the offer, Ahaz cloaked himself in false piety. He said he would not ask, lest he put the Lord to the test. At first the words sound devout, even biblical, since Deuteronomy warns against testing God. Yet the situation made the difference. When God himself commands a sign, refusing one is disobedience, not faith. Ahaz’s reply was an evasion, a way to mask his unbelief and justify the political path he had already chosen. He intended to trust Assyria rather than God. His words served as a shield for rebellion, not a confession of reverence.

Professing believers often repeat Ahaz’s error in their own way. They say they will not test God, and use the language of humility to cover their unbelief. In truth they have already decided where to place their confidence. They trust in medicine, economics, politics, science, or even their sheer effort, anything but God's power to work miracles. They borrow Ahaz’s words and follow his path, trusting the arm of flesh while pretending to revere God.

Isaiah saw through the hypocrisy and issued a sharp rebuke. By rejecting God’s command, Ahaz had insulted heaven. He had wearied men by his failures as king, and now he wearied God by rejecting his word. To expose the offense, Isaiah announced that God would give a sign anyway, one far greater than Ahaz could have imagined. The virgin would conceive and bear a son, and his name would be Immanuel, God with us. This sign bypassed the unbelieving king and pointed forward to the Christ who would embody the promise of divine presence. Ahaz’s refusal did not cancel God’s word, but it excluded him from its blessing.

Faithless men misuse the question of signs in two ways. Some demand them before they will believe, setting conditions for God as if his word were not enough. Others refuse them when God offers, hiding behind claims of humility while they rely on their own schemes. Both paths amount to unbelief. Ahaz exemplified the second. The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus’ time

exemplified the first. They asked for signs to test him, not to trust him. His reply exposed their evil: only a wicked generation seeks signs as a prerequisite to faith.

The history of God's people shows a different pattern for those who believe. Moses received signs to confirm his mission, though he had not thought to ask. God turned his staff into a serpent and made his hand leprous and whole again, so that Israel would know the Lord had sent him. These signs did not arise from skepticism, but from God's initiative to strengthen the faith of his servant and his people. Peter, when he saw Jesus walking on the sea, asked to join him on the water. Jesus approved the request and called him out. The rebuke came only when Peter faltered midway. His failure was not in asking, but in doubting after he had begun. Jesus himself promised that those who believe in him would do the works he did and even greater ones, because he was going to the Father. Signs and wonders are not bargaining chips for the skeptic but the rightful pursuit of the believer.

If you demand signs before faith, you imitate the Pharisees and align yourself with unbelief. If you refuse signs when God commands them, you imitate Ahaz and weary the Lord with hypocrisy. If you use the absence of signs as an excuse against the gospel, you reveal that you do not belong to Christ. And if you challenge those who believe by demanding proofs on your own terms, as cessationists often do, you parade your faithlessness under a religious banner. In every case, the sin lies in resisting the signs that God gives for his word and his people.

But if you believe, the situation is altogether different. Faith welcomes the signs that God offers. Faith asks for more and is approved. Faith presses forward to greater works because Christ has spoken. The Christian duty is not to shy away from miracles but to seek them. The church is called to expand in signs and wonders, to display the power of God in healing, deliverance, and works that point to Christ. Every refusal to pursue them diminishes the witness of the gospel and contradicts the command of the Lord. Seek signs because you believe, not because you do not believe.

The story of Ahaz warns against refusing God's offer. The rebuke of Jesus warns against demanding signs because of unbelief. The record of Moses, Peter, and the promise of Christ show the right course for those who trust God. Faith does not shrink from signs. It seeks them, receives them, and multiplies them. The believer must never make excuses to avoid them, for to do so is sin. Faith looks to the word of God and presses forward into miracles as its proper fruit. God promises greater miracles, and his people must embrace them as their duty.

We Are His Glory

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:11–12)

Somewhere along the line it has become more about what we do for God than what God does for us. This distortion runs deep through the bloodstream of religion. It shapes how people think about faith, worship, and obedience, and it colors how they imagine the Christian life should be lived. But in placing the emphasis on human performance, the gospel is inverted, the truth is emptied of its substance, and God is made to look like the dependent one. The message of grace is turned into a message of transaction, and the majesty of God is reduced to the scale of human achievement.

The assumption seems pious enough. People speak of blessing God, serving him, and offering their best to him, as if he is the great receiver and we are the great benefactors. The mindset appears in prayers that focus more on our devotion than on his action, in testimonies that celebrate our commitment more than his accomplishment, and in sermons that urge us to measure our success by how much we have given up for him. The unspoken belief is that God gains by our performance. He is lifted by our sacrifice, honored by our zeal, and somehow enriched by our labor. But this is an illusion. It treats God as though he waits for us to act so that he may be complete. It makes him the needy one and us the providers. The question arises: are we his God, or is he our God?

This reversal is not a new problem. It marked the religion that Jesus confronted in his own time. The Pharisees constructed an elaborate system of rules, rituals, and acts of devotion that placed the burden on human initiative. God was imagined as one who depended on their zeal to maintain his honor. Every regulation became a way of proving their seriousness, every restriction a way of boasting in their sacrifice. Their religion was a display of what they could do for God, not what God had promised to do for them. When Jesus healed, forgave, and restored, he exposed the fraud. He showed that God acts with power and compassion, while man is the receiver of mercy. He came to tear down the illusion of self-made righteousness and to replace it with the reality of divine accomplishment.

To think of Christian faith as our work for God is to carry on the same inversion. It turns Christ into our project. We congratulate ourselves for our service, our piety, our ministry, as if Jesus exists to be the crown of our devotion. But Scripture confronts us with the opposite. Paul said to the Ephesians that we are God's workmanship. We are his accomplishment, the evidence of his design and the fruit of his will. The gospel insists that the credit belongs to him. Our identity is defined by what he has done, not by what we have offered. God is not our accomplishment. We are his accomplishment.

Paul carried the thought further in this letter to the Ephesians. He said that we are God's inheritance, the possession that he himself claims, and the display of his glory. This defines the

entire perspective. Our lives are not evidence of how much we can achieve for God, but of how much God has achieved in us. The believer is not a monument to his own effort, but the inheritance secured by God's sacrifice in Christ. When Paul said that we are to the praise of his glory, he did not mean that our independent efforts add honor to God. He meant that our very existence as redeemed people proves the greatness of God's plan and the certainty of his will. We stand as living testimonies that God has chosen and saved, and that his purpose is triumphant and glorious.

Human-centered religion measures glory by what we bring to God. The gospel measures glory by what God brings to us. He is the one who sustains us. We are not the ones who sustain him with our worship. He blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. We are not the ones who bless him with our spiritual sacrifice and service. His exaltation is displayed in his own achievement, rather than in what we manage to achieve. To imagine that the Christian life is mainly about what we do for God and what we give up and suffer for him is to contradict the entire point of grace. He is God and we are his people, he is the giver and we are the receivers, he is the actor and we are the evidence of his action.

Faith restores this order. By faith, we understand that all things begin in God. All things are sustained by him, and are completed in him. Faith confesses that salvation is his work, not ours. It declares that worship is a response, not a supply. It acknowledges that every good work we perform is prepared beforehand by God, so that even our obedience is a demonstration of his accomplishment rather than an addition to it. Faith does not imagine that we enrich God. Faith rejoices that God has enriched us.

We are his glory, because we are the result of his accomplishment. His glory is not in what we attempt for him, but in what he has made of us. The church is his inheritance, his possession, his workmanship, and his display case for the greatness of his grace. Every Christian stands as proof that God has acted with power and mercy. Every life transformed in Christ is evidence that God's purpose has prevailed. When Paul said that we are to the praise of his glory, he does not assign us a project, but he declares our identity. We are his glory because he has glorified himself in us.

The gospel of faith and grace sets us free from the burden of sustaining God. We were never meant to serve as his benefactors, nor could we ever succeed in the attempt. The gospel reveals that God chooses us and treasures us as his inheritance. Our task is not to make him complete but to trust that he has completed us in Christ. To live by faith is to accept our place as his accomplishment, to rejoice that we are his possession, and to boast in the truth that he has made us the proclamation of his glory.

Washed by Christ

Anyone who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. (John 13:10)

The words of Jesus to Peter in this passage reveal the position of every person who belongs to him. The one who has been washed by Christ stands entirely clean. There remains only the daily cleansing of the feet, the removal of the dust from walking through this world. This picture leaves no room for the common confession that a Christian remains a sinner in the same way he was before he believed. The apostles teach that Christ's sacrifice brings an end to the consciousness of sin. Those who claim to follow Christ but insist that they are still sinners reject the power of his blood and place it on the same level as the blood of animals. The Letter to the Hebrews declares that the sacrifices of the Law could not cleanse the conscience, but that the blood of Christ removes sin and the awareness of guilt from those who trust him. If sin-consciousness remains, faith in the gospel has not taken place.

The one who has been washed by Christ possesses a status that the Bible never applies to unbelievers. A Christian may stumble and commit sins, but he is not identified as a sinner in the way the Bible uses the term. The sinner stands outside the covenant, condemned and alien to God. The Christian stands inside the covenant, righteous with the very righteousness of God. This is not a matter of degree, as if salvation moves a man from being a full sinner to a partial sinner. It is a matter of kind. The new birth produces a new creature, and a new creature is not the old creature in a slightly improved condition.

Jesus told Peter that refusal to be washed by him means having no share with him at all. There is no partnership between Christ and those who insist that they remain unwashed. The one who has been washed is clean except for the feet. He remains in fellowship with Christ and receives the ongoing cleansing that comes through the word of God. The one who insists that he remains filthy after this washing shows that he has never been washed and has no part in Christ. To confess the same identity that belonged to the old man is to deny the gospel and side with the accuser rather than the Savior.

The identity of a Christian is bound to the righteousness of Christ. God's own righteousness is counted to the believer and rests upon him. The worth of Christ's blood outweighs the sum of all human sin. No stain survives the work of the cross. Cleansing comes through the teaching of Christ, not through sickness, calamity, or the decay of the body. These afflictions have no purifying power.

A divided mind produces a weak faith. Many live in a contradiction. They claim that Christ has cleansed them, while holding the belief that they remain sinners. Such a belief cancels assurance, drains strength, and leaves the conscience clouded. Entrance into heaven belongs to the righteous. Those who will not affirm their righteousness in Christ cannot affirm their place in heaven. To question the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness is to question Christ himself.

Paul's statement to Timothy has been misused to perpetuate the lie that a Christian is still the chief of sinners. The Greek word *protos* carries the sense of foremost or most prominent, not necessarily worst in moral quality. In the context, Paul recalls his former life as a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent opponent of the faith. His fame as an enemy of the gospel made his conversion the most conspicuous example of grace. He became the most prominent display of God's mercy, a living proof that Christ saves even those who once opposed him. After his conversion, Paul maintained a clear conscience, defended his blameless conduct, and exhorted the churches to live in the righteousness given to them. He never taught that he remained the worst sinner alive. He testified that he had been transformed into a new man.

Jesus said that the disciples were already clean because of the word he had spoken to them. His word prunes and purifies, producing fruit in those who remain in him. This cleansing happens by revelation and instruction, not by the blows of adversity. Affliction without the word of God changes nothing in the heart.

The mindset of guilt and inferiority belongs to the unconverted. To carry that mindset into the Christian life reveals an unconverted state. Those who embrace it worship a false god, one who demands endless confession of impurity but never provides cleansing. Many preachers have promoted this posture as humility, but it is in fact unbelief disguised in religious language.

Charles Spurgeon once repeated the old lines, "I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all; But Jesus Christ is my all in all." In another place he prayed, "Jesus, accept a sinner... though these twenty years I have known thy name, yet still a sinner I come to thee." Such words may sound devout, but they deny the reality of the new birth. They portray the Christian as unchanged in identity, still in the same class as the condemned, as if the blood of Christ had not accomplished what the gospel declares.

Paul could speak of himself as a sinner only when referring to his past. The Christian may testify in the same way. A murderer who has come to Christ may declare that he was a murderer and that Christ saves murderers. But this is no longer his identity. He has been changed. The Christian does not think like a sinner. He does not feel like a sinner. And the Christian life does not resemble the life of a sinner. The Spirit of God creates a different kind of human being.

When the sense of being a sinner dominates the sense of being righteous in Christ, faith rests more in sin than in salvation. That faith cannot save. The faith that saves receives the word of Christ about what he has accomplished and who the believer is because of him. A man washed by Christ is clean. He walks in the awareness of that cleansing, and he rejects every thought that treats the blood of Christ as inadequate. This is the faith that overcomes the world.

Walking by Faith as a Child

**Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 18:3)**

A child learns to walk by taking steps, falling, and rising again. The fall may bring a moment of crying, but the thought of quitting never enters the mind. The child continues without planning a retreat. There is no calculation of the odds or analysis of past attempts. The desire is to walk, and that desire rules the process. The falls are soon forgotten. The child does not develop a philosophy of defeat, nor is there a lingering shame that prevents the next attempt.

The child's mind is free from the scars that adults often carry. There is no lasting embarrassment that attaches itself to a mistake. There is no identity shaped by failure. The next step is taken as if the last fall never happened. The attention remains on the act itself, not on the possibility of falling again. This is not denial of reality, but a refusal to dwell on what has no power to define the outcome.

In contrast, adults tend to live with a constant awareness of past defeats. They turn every setback into a case study on why success may never come. They become skilled at forming explanations that protect their image. They speak of God in ways that absolve themselves of responsibility. They develop intricate theologies to justify weakness. They begin to question whether they were ever meant to succeed, whether it was ever God's will that they should walk in the first place.

This is where the difference must be made clear. Faith is not an experiment to see if we are chosen for a life of power. It is not a rare privilege granted to a few. God calls every believer to live by faith. It is the life we were created to live. We are made to see prayers answered, to work miracles, to obtain promises, and to perform exploits in the name of Jesus. These are not exceptions to the Christian life. They are its normal state.

The child does not begin with questions about whether the parent wants him to walk or whether he has the right to walk. The child walks because walking is the thing to do. In the same way, we believe because believing is the thing to do. The word of God speaks, and our place is to act on it. Faith thinks about doing, not about failing. It looks ahead to the next step rather than backward to the last fall. It treats the promise as the controlling reality and moves accordingly.

Pride has no place here. Pride would make us stop and preserve our status by explaining why nothing happened. Pride would keep us from another attempt so we could guard our reputation. Pride would rather protect the illusion of wisdom than face the humility of repeated effort. Faith throws pride away and moves again. It refuses to accept paralysis.

Childlike faith is not immaturity. It is the refusal to become the kind of adult who has learned to accommodate unbelief. We are to mature in understanding, in strength, in skill, but not in the

suspicion that miracles are unlikely and God's promises are fragile. The child's persistence must remain in us even as our doctrine grows. The boldness to try again after falling must never leave us.

The steps of faith may be small or great, but the same rule applies. Keep moving. Do not create a religion that protects you from the embarrassment of trying. Do not let the falls become your theology. Fix your mind on the act of walking. The more you walk, the more you step into the life you were born to live.

Vote Out Your Pastor First

Christians devote much of their energy to debating political candidates, but the more urgent crisis is in the pulpits of their own churches. Congregations spend hours discussing which party should be in power, but they allow faithless pastors and professors to stand before them without opposition. If you insist on exercising your vote and holding someone accountable, start with the man who presumes to speak for God while contradicting his word. Vote out your pastor first.

The obsession with political figures is a convenient distraction from the real confrontation that Scripture demands. Christians claim to be acting responsibly when they spend their time protesting against political leaders, but they give a free pass to those who deny the power of Jesus Christ while preaching in his name. They speak loudly about a president or senator, but they remain silent about the pastor who misleads them. The greater responsibility lies not in shaking one's fist at Washington, but in refusing to tolerate a false shepherd who rejects the promises of God in full view of the people.

Jesus himself gave instruction on this matter. He warned about wolves in sheep's clothing, and he condemned the scribes and Pharisees as blind guides and hypocrites who devour the flock. He declared that those who enter by another way are thieves and robbers, and he described the hireling who abandons the sheep when danger comes. His words leave no excuse for tolerating false teachers. The apostles carried this forward, with Peter declaring that judgment begins with the household of God. To disregard this and pour one's strength into the political sphere is to disobey Jesus. The Christian who tolerates a faithless pastor while spending his passion on political activism has inverted his priorities and defied his Lord.

The clearest example of this betrayal is cessationism. Entire denominations and seminaries insist that the promises of healing and power in the gospel are no longer for today, even though the Bible itself refutes such teaching. This is an invention of unbelief imposed upon the text, and it has devastating consequences. First, it has condemned countless people to unnecessary suffering and death. Those who might have been healed in the name of Jesus are told instead to accept disease as their portion. Second, it has drained families of wealth, sending them into years of medical expenses that could have been spared by the simple faith that the word of God demands. Third, it has created an entire generation of disillusioned Christians who read the promises of Scripture but are told that none of it applies to them. In short, cessationism kills, impoverishes, and destroys faith, while maintaining a veneer of human orthodoxy that deceives the naïve.

The cessationist pastor is an enemy of Jesus who stands before the congregation as a traitor. He strips the Bible of its authority and trains believers to expect nothing from God but silence and inaction. This is a greater danger than any political scandal, because it directly attacks the faith of the people and severs them from the blessings of God. The influence of a corrupt politician is serious, but the influence of a corrupt pastor ruins souls. To expend your energy on the former while excusing the latter is madness.

Christians lament moral decline, political corruption, and cultural decay, but they rarely acknowledge the root cause. The gospel is scarcely preached. Sermons are delivered every week, but they are filled with human traditions, denominational formulas, and theological evasions. Jesus Christ is preached more like a symbol or mascot than a divine Lord of wisdom and miracle power. But without Jesus, the church becomes a powerless institution, and society degenerates accordingly. The decay of the world is the fruit of spiritual decay within the church. When the pulpit ceases to thunder with the authority of God's word and ceases to demonstrate the power of God's Spirit, the world loses its witness and descends further into darkness. Political campaigns cannot reverse this process, for the problem is spiritual, not civic.

The real protest must begin at the church door. If Christians desire to campaign, let them campaign against the false shepherds who rob them of the blessings of God. If they wish to post on social media, let them name their pastors and professors, exposing their faithlessness to the world. Call out those who undermine the authority of Scripture. Cancel those who teach cessationism. Boycott those who do not pray for the sick, or who oppose speaking in tongues. If they demand accountability, let them demand it from the seminaries that train men to deny the word of God. Public disgrace belongs to those who publicly contradict Jesus Christ. To tolerate them is to participate in their evil.

Devote your energy first to confronting the one who misrepresents Jesus Christ in front of you week after week. Hold your pastor accountable for what he says in the pulpit rather than wasting your passion on signs in the streets. Pour your anger upon the unbelief that has emptied the church of power instead of raging at society's corruption. Judgment begins at the house of God. Vote out your pastor first, fire the seminary professor first, and you will discover that the world changes when the word of God is preached with wisdom and miracle power. Society will continue in corruption as long as the church remains faithless. Putting a tiny bandage on a corpse will not raise the dead. Reform begins with the church, for this is the first and greatest task laid upon every Christian.

Two Sons

What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." And he answered, "I will not," but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, "I go, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, "The first." (Matthew 21:28–31)

Jesus told of a man who had two sons. One promised obedience but failed to act, and another refused but later complied. The lesson is that obedience carries greater approval than mere profession. This principle not only exposes hypocrisy but also confronts the church's long record of claiming loyalty to God while suppressing his commands and power. The parable provides a lens through which we may assess the conduct of those who bear his name.

The Father entrusts his work to the church through the authority of his Son. To speak in the name of Jesus is to continue his ministry and to proclaim the word of God with power. The church exists for obedience to his command. Across the centuries many who profess Christ have deserted this charge, keeping the language of devotion while refusing the obedience God commands.

The disobedient son illustrates the prevailing pattern of the church through the ages. Its leaders have proclaimed reverence for Scripture, building intricate systems in its name. They have guarded the letter, quarreled about details, and issued endless confessions. Yet when confronted with the demand to act on God's word and to show its power, they have refused. They are the son who promised obedience but never entered the vineyard. Their profession only heightens their guilt, for by their own words they confess knowledge of the commands and promises they reject.

The Pharisees strained out a gnat but swallowed a camel. They obsessed over technicalities while missing the substance of God's command. Many of the church's intellectual traditions have done the same. They exalt human philosophy above divine revelation, confining God to frameworks and traditions of their own design. They cloak unbelief in scholarly robes, pretending to honor the word while rejecting its meaning. They multiply words yet produce no obedience. Such people prove themselves false sons, whose lips honor God but whose actions betray him.

There is another kind of response, less than ideal but more acceptable. Some are careless and imprecise in doctrine, even negligent in handling Scripture, but they often carry out more of God's commands than the meticulous intellectuals and religionists. They obey where others only argue. In practice, they may believe for God's help or follow his call with a sincerity that exposes the hypocrisy of those who analyze every word while denying its power. In this respect, they resemble the second son, who at first refused but later did the will of his father. Such people receive approval, for obedience has greater worth than mere profession.

Their obedience, however, remains incomplete. Their lack of precision leaves them vulnerable to distortion and error, and their witness is often unstable. They may act faithfully in one matter but falter in another. Even so, partial obedience still surpasses hypocrisy, though the Father seeks sons who will both confess and obey, knowing his will and performing it with understanding.

God desires sons whose confession and obedience agree, who hold the truth with precision and live it with faith. Confession without obedience is hypocrisy, and obedience without confession is unstable. Only when doctrine and action converge does the son reflect the will of the Father. This is the pattern of genuine faith, where confession brings forth obedience and obedience confirms confession. Anything less falls short.

The future of the church lies not in repeating old failures but in embodying this unity. Sons approved by the Father are those who refuse both hypocrisy and carelessness. They will not offer empty profession to God while denying his power, nor will they stumble into partial obedience without understanding. They will be sons who say and do, who profess God's word with knowledge and precision and act upon it with faith. Their theology will not remain on the page, and their obedience will not float free of doctrine. Word and deed will be one.

The parable of the two sons, then, is not merely a moral tale but a judgment against the church's history and a call to its future. Those who profess loyalty to God's word while denying the Spirit's power are condemned. Those who stumble into obedience while lacking sound doctrine are approved only in part. But those who unite profession and obedience, doctrine and action, are the true sons who please the Father. The vineyard awaits such laborers.

Two Kinds of Hypocrisy

The most common charge against religion is hypocrisy. Even unbelievers who care little for truth or righteousness know to denounce hypocrisy. Their problem, of course, is that they are hypocrites themselves. They accuse others of the very thing that defines them. Nevertheless, hypocrisy is real and dangerous, and the Bible denounces it in the strongest possible terms. It is not only a moral fault but a direct rejection of God's word. Those who persist in it show that they do not belong to Christ, no matter what confession they make with their lips.

When people speak of hypocrisy, they usually mean one thing. They mean that a person praises the blessings of the gospel while denying God's authority over him. This is indeed hypocrisy. A man who rejoices in forgiveness but refuses to repent, who praises grace while despising holiness, lives a lie. He wants the fruit of the tree without the root, the inheritance without the Son. This kind of hypocrisy is everywhere, and it leads multitudes to destruction.

But there is another kind of hypocrisy. A person may cling to obligations while rejecting the blessings. He may talk endlessly about self-denial, cross-bearing, or moral duties, while scorning healing, peace, joy, abundance, and power. He pretends to honor the commands while trampling the promises. He keeps his traditions and scruples, but despises the true gospel. He claims to believe in Christ, but only the Christ who demands. He has no interest in the Christ who gives. This hypocrisy is more subtle, and even more deadly. It mutilates the gospel by cutting faith and grace out of it. And then we see there is really nothing left.

Both kinds of hypocrisy commit the same essential crime: they change the word of God. Some distort his word to eliminate sin. They redefine terms until what God calls wicked is celebrated as righteous. They say they have no sin, not because they have been cleansed, but because they have manipulated language to excuse themselves. They change doctrine to match their desires, and then declare that God approves of what they love. The people enjoy their perversion, so they rewrite God's word to call it holy. They even say that God applauds them. This is hypocrisy in its most shameless form.

Others change God's word to excuse their weakness. Their experience is powerless, sickly, and barren. Instead of letting Scripture set their expectations, they let their lack define their theology. They say that miracles are gone, that power is no longer for today, that faith accomplishes little or nothing. In this way, they alter God's word to match their failures. They even congratulate themselves for being realistic, mature, and biblical, when in fact they are faithless, hypocritical, and deceitful.

True faith does the opposite. It does not bend the word of God to experience. It bends experience to his word. Faith takes the promises of God as definition and standard. It insists that God's word is true even when experience screams otherwise. Faith expects healing because God promised it. Faith expects abundance because God promised it. Faith expects deliverance, power, miracles, and victory because his word guarantees them. Faith is loyalty to the promises as well as to the commands.

Scripture says, "Do not be deceived: whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." If you sow unbelief, you will reap unbelief. If you sow the doctrine of sickness, you will reap sickness. If you replace God with the powers of this earth, he will replace you with another in heaven. Hypocrisy does not go unpunished. It brings its own judgment.

The hypocrisy of religionists illustrates this. They use God's will as an excuse to avoid obedience. The Bible says to pray in faith for healing. The Bible says it will surely happen. But they answer with deceit: "Yes, God heals, if it is his will." This is nothing more than unbelief and rebellion dressed in religious language. It is the same as saying, "I will believe it after it happens, but not before." It is the exact opposite of faith. If healing comes, they say, "Praise God, it was his will." If healing does not come, they say the same thing. In both cases they have refused to believe God's word, and then congratulate themselves as if they had been spiritual. This is hypocrisy of the worst kind.

The cessationist commits the worst crime. He crucifies Christ again and again by rejecting the blessings that his blood purchased. Healing, miracles, and gifts of power are not side benefits but the gospel. Christ bore our sicknesses. Christ promised power from on high. To dismiss these things as unworthy of the gospel is to trample Christ himself. It is to treat his blood as worthless and his covenant as a lie. The cessationist takes the cross and rips out its meaning, then pretends to honor it. That is hypocrisy.

Some defend this hypocrisy with appeals to divine sovereignty. They say that God is in control, and if he wills healing, it will come. This sounds pious, but it contradicts Scripture. The same Bible that teaches God's sovereignty also commands prayer, promises answers, and describes miracles as normal. If your doctrine of God's sovereignty contradicts interaction with God as Scripture describes it, then you are wrong. True theology cannot pit God against his own word.

The Bible is in truth a massive rebuke to faithless religion. Every promise, every command to believe, every word that exalts faith over sight, stands as a divine insult to their hypocrisy. Scripture is God's middle finger to the theologian who says, "It will only happen if God wills." God already revealed his will. The only question is whether you will believe it.

Rhetoric against these errors must be strong, even offensive. Some say we should tone down our language. They say it is only a difference in tradition. They call it a denominational matter, as if it were only a matter of taste or clique. They have no idea what is at stake. This is about the gospel itself. To compromise on this is to reject the gospel. To excuse it is to betray Christ.

The hypocrite may say he loves Christ. He may parade his reverence for God's sovereignty. He may wear his obligations like a badge of honor. But if he refuses the blessings, if he denies the promises, if he changes God's word to match his failure, then his faith is a lie. The hypocrite who accepts the blessings but rejects God's authority will perish. The hypocrite who accepts the obligations but rejects God's blessings will perish as well, because he never believed God in the first place. Christ saves only those who embrace the gospel, and there is only one gospel.

The Whole Bible Is a Promise

Christians are often trained to approach the Bible as if it were a reference book filled with scattered promises to be located and claimed. They are shown how to turn to a verse that says God heals or another that says God prospers, and to treat these as promises that can be brought before him in prayer. This method is valid. Faith rests on God's word, and when a Christian trusts what God has said, he receives what God has promised. God has confirmed this by answering those who rely on specific passages.

However, Scripture offers far more than isolated verses to be claimed in particular circumstances. The whole Bible is itself a promise. Every part conveys what God has determined to do for his people and expresses his intention toward those who trust him. Christians should recognize that all of Scripture together forms a unified declaration of God's nature and blessing, not a scattered collection of pledges.

The law does more than regulate conduct. It sets forth the life of order, justice, and blessing that God ordains for the righteous. The psalms celebrate the security and prosperity of those who take refuge in him. The wisdom books portray the stability and strength of those who trust him, in contrast to the downfall of the fool. The prophets pronounce judgment on rebellion but also announce restoration and renewal for those who return to God. The Gospels show Jesus revealing the nature of God by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, casting out demons, and raising the dead. The epistles assure Christians that they share in every blessing through Christ and that God's power works in them for life and victory. Taken together, these writings form a consistent witness. Each part affirms the same truth: God acts for the good of his people.

God has given this record to create expectation. Through the repeated testimony of Scripture, Christians learn what to anticipate from him. When they read that God brought Israel out of Egypt, they see his power to deliver. When they read that he restored the exiles, they see his power to renew after loss. When they read that Jesus healed and prospered those who trusted him, they see his will to give abundance to those who place their faith in him. Scripture shapes expectation by showing again and again what God is like and how he acts.

This expectation directs the Christian toward a distinctive way of life. Scripture presents the righteous as flourishing like a tree planted by streams of water, with leaves that do not wither and fruit that comes in season. It depicts God's people as restored after affliction and blessed in their labor. It records Jesus announcing good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and life to the dead. It proclaims through the apostles that Christians are blessed with every blessing in Christ, raised with him, and seated with him in heavenly places. These portrayals express God's continuing purpose, showing the pattern of life he grants to those who trust him.

For this reason, broad knowledge of the Bible is essential. A Christian who knows only a few verses can exercise faith in some areas, but his expectation remains narrow. One who reads widely develops an expansive outlook, because he sees that God's favor pervades every part of

life. General knowledge of Scripture trains the Christian to recognize patterns in how God acts. The repetition of God's ways across laws, psalms, histories, prophecies, and letters gives him a settled sense of God's nature. He comes to know not only what God has said in isolated moments, but what God is like in himself. He learns to expect deliverance because deliverance is what God does. He learns to expect abundance because generosity is what God delights to give. He learns to expect restoration because renewal is what God repeatedly accomplishes. General knowledge of Scripture gives the Christian an instinct for God's character, and that instinct governs his life of faith.

This emphasis on God's nature is crucial. A handful of promises teaches that God will act in certain ways under certain conditions. The whole Bible teaches what God is like at all times. It reveals a God who is merciful, generous, faithful, and powerful. Christians who absorb Scripture broadly gain more than particular assurances. They gain a confidence rooted in who God is. They are not left to wonder whether he will intervene, because they have seen his nature across every page. They live with a sense of certainty about him, not just about scattered words from him.

All of this finds its center in Christ. He is the embodiment of the whole promise. In him, the many strands of Scripture converge into one fulfillment. He is the seed of Abraham, the king from David's line, the servant spoken of by Isaiah, and the Word through whom all things were made. The law pointed to him, the psalms anticipated him, the prophets foretold him, and the apostles proclaimed his completed work. All Scripture finds its confirmation in him, and every blessing of God comes to the Christian through him. To say that the Bible is a promise is to say that Christ himself is the promise, and that trusting him is to receive everything that God is and everything that God has pledged.

Therefore, when the Christian comes to the Bible, he should approach it with the conviction that all of it belongs to him. Every part of Scripture speaks as God's word to him. He learns to read with a view to fullness rather than fragments. He comes to know God himself, not only isolated statements from him. He recognizes that Scripture is a unified promise stretching from Genesis to Revelation, fulfilled and guaranteed in Christ.

The Christian who embraces this truth gains an expectation that governs every circumstance. His faith rests on the entire counsel of God. When he reads of Abraham's prosperity, he expects abundance in his own life. When he reads of David's deliverance, he expects triumph over his enemies. When he reads of the exiles restored, he expects renewal after loss. When he reads of Jesus healing the sick, he expects health in his own body. When he reads of the apostles performing signs and wonders, he expects supernatural experiences in his own ministry. Scripture trains him to know God's ways, and it gives him confidence to live by that knowledge.

The Bible is more than a source of scattered promises. It is the comprehensive revelation of God's nature and will for his people. It builds a sense of who God is, what he does, and what his people should expect. It is one great promise, embodied and fulfilled in Christ, and it calls every Christian to live with the confidence that this promise governs his entire life.

There Are Seven Days to Be Healed

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.” And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.”

Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. (Luke 13:10–17)

"There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." These were the words hurled at Jesus when he restored a suffering person. After all, there were six other days, ample time for treatment, recovery, or relief. Why insist on the seventh? Why choose the one day that tradition had fenced off as untouchable? The saying was less about mercy than about control. It exposed how a rule designed to honor life had been twisted into an excuse to withhold it.

The appeal to law is often a disguise for power. Rules can be written to protect, but they can also be wielded to exclude. A prohibition meant for order can be turned into an obstacle against compassion. The very letter that once guarded life can be drained of spirit, leaving behind only a dead tradition. The statement “come six days to be healed” assumes that healing must bend before custom. Yet real healing reveals the opposite: tradition bends before mercy. The law, when rightly understood, was never hostile to relief or restoration. Its purpose was to preserve life, and in that purpose, healing stands consistent with it.

But tradition has a way of fossilizing. What once protected life becomes a museum piece, guarded by gatekeepers who care more for appearances than for truth. In the name of honoring what was handed down, they deny what is happening in the present. They cling to old fences long after the field has changed. Healing unsettles them, because it shows that tradition is not ultimate. Healing is greater than tradition, because it answers to the reality of Christ rather than to the authority of memory. When someone is restored, it proves that truth does not wait for custom’s approval.

This also explains why healing carries an urgency. It is not for tomorrow, not for a more “fitting” time, not for after permission has been secured. It presses into the present. The idea that one must wait for the correct season is a polite excuse for delay, but delay is itself a denial. The

demand that healing submit to a timetable is a way of saying it should never happen at all. Real restoration breaks through such postponements and insists: it is for now.

Healing is never neutral. It exposes the one who welcomes it and the one who resists it. It unmasks those who hide behind pretense. Those who pretend to care about law reveal that they only care about their control. Those who claim loyalty to tradition reveal that they fear losing their grip on others. Healing shines a light, and in that light the masks fall away. The refusal to accept restoration is never innocent. It is the sign of a heart bound to hypocrisy.

The truth, then, is that every day is a healing day. No calendar owns it, no ritual controls it, no authority can dictate its schedule. To insist that there is only a restricted time for renewal is to deny the nature of life itself. Life presses forward every day, and every day presents its opportunity. To accept this is to live awake, unbound by the old illusions that tell us to wait for a sanctioned hour. If there are seven days in a week, then all seven belong to healing.

Resistance to this always reveals more than it admits. Watch carefully those who oppose restoration and you will see their inner corruption. Their opposition is not a matter of principle but of pride. They resist because they cannot endure a world in which their rules are exposed as hollow. Their doctrines, whether philosophical, cultural, or institutional, invariably turn out defective. They twist arguments, they invent excuses, they build structures of delay, but all to the same end: to keep faith, life, and salvation from moving freely. Opposition to healing always signals deeper rebellion.

This explains the ferocity with which such opponents move. When they cannot suppress the act itself, they turn against the one who performs it. History shows this pattern again and again. Those who resist healing are those who, in truth, wish to eliminate the very possibility of it. They may never admit it in their own words, but their actions declare it. To oppose the act of restoration is to oppose life. To deny the one who heals is to wish death upon Christ himself. And so the struggle is never just about a single instance of healing, but about whether God himself has the right to act unbounded by tradition.

The refrain “come six days to be healed” thus collapses under its own hypocrisy. It was never about the days. It was never about law. It was never about order. It was about suppressing mercy, silencing life, and protecting religious territory. But Jesus Christ overturned it all. Healing showed that the days are not limited, that the calendar cannot restrain God, that his law agrees with mercy, and that tradition cannot stand against truth. Healing exposed the pretenders for what they were, and it continues to do the same today. There are seven days to be healed. Every day belongs to life.

There Is Always a Rational Explanation

For from him and through him and to him are all things. (Romans 11:36)

Unbelievers often dismiss what they hear about God, or anything that their worldview cannot explain, by saying there is always a rational explanation. They say it with confidence, as if they have removed the need for God, or as if their worldview is complete. In their usage, the phrase points to science, and their science points away from divine involvement. To them, rational means empirical and naturalistic. It is not a neutral statement, nor is it rational. It is a declaration that God is excluded from the start.

The problem is not that they affirm rationality, but that they lie about it, and what they affirm is in fact irrationality. They assume that reason begins with human observation and develops through fallacies such as induction. They treat science as if it defines the boundaries of what is reasonable. This is arbitrary and absurd. Rationality is not owned by science. It belongs to God. He is truth and the one who makes all things consistent with himself. The word of God is not one among many sources of information. It is the foundation of every fact and thought.

When the unbeliever says there is always a rational explanation, he means there is always a scientific explanation. He thinks in terms of causes that can be measured and repeated without reference to God. But this misses the most obvious point, that science assumes their essential principles without evidence that would satisfy their own requirements or definition of rationality. From the Christian viewpoint, even the things he calls scientific exist because God made them so. God is the cause behind every cause, the explanation behind every explanation. Nothing exists apart from his will. Nothing continues apart from his power.

This is why the Bible speaks of God as the one from whom and through whom and to whom are all things. Science cannot even reliably observe patterns in creation, still less can it explain why those patterns exist or why they continue. Every physical process operates because God causes it to operate. Every so-called natural law is an expression of his constant activity. When a miracle occurs, it is not an interruption of reason but an expression of the same divine power that sustains ordinary events. The difference is not between reasonable and unreasonable, but between the ways in which God acts.

Miracles are rational because they proceed from the rational Creator. They are not violations of order, but works of the one who established all order. The parting of the Red Sea was rational. The resurrection of Jesus was rational. The healing of the blind and the raising of the dead were rational. They were rational because they happened in a world made and ruled by God, and they were done according to his purpose.

Those who reject this are not standing on higher intellectual ground. They are suppressing the truth. They use the patterns and theories they imagined about creation as evidence against the Creator, just as Paul described in Romans 1. They see what God has made and how he rules it, but they refuse to acknowledge him. They say they are explaining the world, but they are

explaining it away. Their “rational explanation” is irrational because it in fact violates all logic and ignores the source of all reason.

The Christian, however, can take their statement and speak it truly. Indeed, there is always a rational explanation. God is always the rational explanation. When a sick person recovers, the reason is God. When the harvest grows, the reason is God. When a person comes to faith, the reason is God. When the sun rises, the reason is God. Whether he works through what we call ordinary means or extraordinary acts, the cause is the same.

This is true reason, which is faith. Faith sees the world as it is. In fact, it is the only way to see truly, so that it sees the hand of God in everything. It perceives that every process depends on God. It perceives that miracles and daily life are both expressions of God’s active involvement. It sees both as the work of the same Lord who governs all reality.

The Christian thinks, prays, and lives in the constant knowledge that God is the explanation for all things. In this understanding, the spiritual and the rational are one. God is never an optional hypothesis or a heuristic device, but the present and active cause of all. This is the only rational position, that everything exists and happens because God has willed it.

When the unbeliever says there is always a rational explanation, he has no idea what he says. God is the only rational explanation. It is irrational, and entirely stupid, to suppose that matter and energy can sustain themselves. Man's theories and methods can never come close to removing the Creator as the immediate rational explanation for all things. His will determines the events of history and the motion of matter. His power sustains galaxies and grass. His word governs angels and ants.

From him and through him and to him are all things. This is the absolute description of reality. Every star and every cell begins in him, depends on him, and returns to him. Science -- that is, the fallen thinking of a group of men -- cannot add to this or subtract from it. To reject God is to reject reason itself, because God is Reason.

There is always a rational explanation. God is always the rational explanation. This is true for the believer who prays and sees his prayer answered. It is true for the scientist who measures and calculates in a world that does not hold itself together. It is true for the unbeliever who denies God with the breath that God gives. All things are from him. All things are through him. All things are to him. This is the only rational way to understand the world, and it is the truth that will stand when every godless explanation has failed.

They Wanted to Kill Lazarus Too

“So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.” (John 12:10–11)

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the miracle could not be hidden. Crowds gathered, and many believed in him because the evidence stood before them in flesh and blood. But the same sign that drew faith also provoked malice. The chief priests, already resolved to destroy Jesus, now also turned their hatred toward Lazarus. His life had become an unanswerable testimony, and for this reason they plotted to erase him. The Faithless will oppose not only the one who ministers the miracle, but also those who receive from God.

The narrative begins in Bethany. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, fell sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus, confident that his presence would bring healing. But Jesus delayed, declaring that the outcome would display the glory of God, with the Son of God glorified through it. His delay was by design, because his power would be shown by conquering death. When at last he arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days.

The grief of the sisters shows the tension between human limitation and divine power. Martha met Jesus with a mixture of faith and frustration. She confessed that her brother would not have died if he had been there, and she affirmed belief in a future resurrection. But Jesus lifted her eyes beyond the distant hope of the last day to the present reality of his presence: “I am the resurrection and the life.” Mary also met him with grief, falling at his feet with the same lament. The people who followed her wept, and Jesus himself was deeply moved.

At the tomb, when Jesus commanded the stone to be rolled away, Martha objected. The stench of decay, she reasoned, would testify against any hope. But Jesus insisted that if they believed, they would see the glory of God. He prayed, affirming his Father’s constant attention, and declared that even mentioning this was for the sake of the onlookers, that they might believe. Then he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The dead man emerged, still bound in his grave clothes, and Jesus commanded them to unbind him and let him go. Death itself had obeyed the command of Christ.

The reactions to this event could not have been more divided. Many of the Jews believed in Jesus when they saw Lazarus alive. The miracle was undeniable. But others went to the Pharisees and reported the miracle with a different spirit. The chief priests and Pharisees gathered the council, and rather than rejoicing, they were alarmed. They reasoned that if Jesus continued in this way, all would believe in him, and the Romans would take away their place and their nation. Their concern was for position and stability, not God and truth, and their conclusion was murder. From that day, they resolved that Jesus must die.

It is against this backdrop that John records the plot against Lazarus: “So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.” The irrationality of their scheme is striking. Lazarus had

committed no offense. He had not preached against them, organized resistance, or sought to undermine their authority. He simply lived as a man who had been dead and was now alive. His life was the testimony, and for that alone they sought to destroy him.

Here the perversity of unbelief reaches another point. Their plot against Jesus was already rebellion against the Son of God. But their malice did not stop there. They extended it even to Lazarus, who was passive in the whole event. He did not raise himself, and he did not seek to be a public figure. But they resolved to erase him because his life had become inseparable from the work of Christ. Every glance at Lazarus reminded the people of Jesus' power. Every whisper of his name carried the story of his resurrection. For the leaders, to allow Lazarus to live was to allow an enduring sign of Jesus' authority. The only way to suppress the sign was to kill the man.

This desperation reveals the true nature of religionist hostility. It is not satisfied with rejecting Christ at the level of doctrine or dismissing his claims with words. When confronted with evidence, unbelief must escalate. It cannot rest until the witness is destroyed. To plot against Lazarus was to attack proof that stood in flesh and blood before them. Their logic was grotesque but consistent with hardened hearts: if the evidence cannot be refuted, eliminate the evidence.

Lazarus stands as a silent witness. Unlike the apostles who proclaimed the gospel with boldness, Lazarus did not confront the rulers in debate. He did not argue. His existence was enough. Each breath he drew, each step he took, was a living rebuke to their unbelief. They hated him for what he represented, and what he represented was Christ's undeniable authority over death. This is why their rage turned toward him. His silence was stronger than their faithless traditions, and his life overpowered their denials.

This was not the first time that a recipient of Christ's power faced hostility. Earlier, Jesus healed a man blind from birth. Instead of rejoicing, the Pharisees interrogated him. They pressured him to deny Christ, insulted him when he refused, and finally cast him out of the synagogue. He was not guilty of any crime. His only offense was that his sight testified to the one who healed him. Like Lazarus, his life stood as evidence that they could not erase by their faithless religion, so they tried to erase him by exclusion.

Religionists persecute not only those who perform miracles but also those who receive them. The man born blind did not heal himself. Lazarus did not raise himself. But both were treated as offenders because their lives exposed the faithlessness of others. The testimony of Christ's power cannot be ignored, so it must either be embraced in faith or suppressed in hatred.

The nature of religious hostility is uncovered. Faithless systems are built on power, reputation, and tradition. A miracle they did not control threatens all three. A testimony of healing or deliverance undermines doctrines that deny the present work of God. A man raised from the dead is a standing contradiction to their claims. If they cannot refute the evidence, they will

attack the witness. The recipient of grace becomes their enemy, not because he has done harm, but because his life exposes their corruption.

This dynamic has continued across the centuries. Believers who testify to healing or other works of God often find themselves met with suspicion or hostility from church members and leaders. Reports of miracles provoke ridicule, jealousy, or fear. The one who received may be silenced, pushed out, or treated as if he threatens the stability of the community. The pattern is unchanged: if the evidence cannot be denied, the evidence must be suppressed. The testimony that should provoke faith instead provokes resentment among the Faithless.

To receive from God is to become a witness, and to become a witness is to invite opposition. Lazarus was raised, and they wanted to kill him. The blind man saw, and they cast him out. Those who live by the power of Christ cannot expect applause from those invested in unbelief. Their testimony is too sharp, their evidence too strong. The world, and especially the world of religion, has no tolerance for proofs it cannot control.

Yet the plots of men cannot undo the work of Christ. Lazarus lived because Christ called him forth, and no scheme of priests could shorten his life apart from God's will. The blind man saw because Jesus opened his eyes, and no expulsion could take away his sight or his salvation. The witness stands firm because it is God's own work. Persecution cannot erase what God has done. It only confirms the power of the testimony.

The Faithless may turn their rage on Christ, on those who proclaim him, and even on those who receive from him. But Christ remains the resurrection and the life. His voice commands the dead, and they rise. His power opens blind eyes, and they see. The life he gives cannot be silenced by hostility. Lazarus still lived, the healed man still saw, and countless others stand as living witnesses to his authority. To persecute them is to oppose Christ himself, and this can only end in damnation.

Think in Terms of Success

The kingdom of God is like a seed. Jesus described it as something that begins in small form but grows until it becomes a great tree. The seed does not remain as it was. Its very nature is increase. In another place, he said that the word produces fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. The logic of the kingdom is growth, expansion, and multiplication. This principle must shape how we think about healing ministry. We do not measure by the supposed failures, but by the success that has begun and the increase that follows.

Healing belongs to the kingdom of God. Where the kingdom arrives, life overtakes death and health overtakes sickness. The ministry of Jesus displayed this from the beginning. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. These signs occurred as the natural outworking of the kingdom. The book of Acts shows the same reality continuing through the apostles. It would be a distortion to describe the kingdom in terms of decline or failure when the teaching of Jesus presents it in terms of unstoppable growth. Once the seed is planted, it must grow.

The same principle applies to healing. The seed of healing is in the gospel. The message itself contains the promise that the sick recover. To accept one healing as genuine means to accept that many more will follow. The seed carries the certainty of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. Healing does not remain a small and rare occurrence. It grows and multiplies as faith continues. The expectation of failure denies the very nature of the kingdom. The expectation of increase follows the teaching of Jesus.

Detractors challenge this and demand what they call proof. They say that if healing is real then the hospitals must be emptied. They think that if every person is not healed at once then the ministry has failed and the entire teaching is false. The challenge reveals their wicked unbelief and rejection of Jesus. Jesus himself did not heal every person at every moment. In his own hometown, he healed only a few because unbelief filled the atmosphere. Scripture does not present this as a failure in Christ, but as the fault of the people who despised him. To demand universal healing in every setting is to oppose the plain teaching of the Bible.

The apostles also faced times when they could not heal. They brought a boy with a demon to Jesus after they had failed to deliver him. Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief. He also rebuked the father for his unbelief. The power of God is certain. The obstacle is unbelief, whether in the minister, the people, or both. To interpret such incidents as proof against healing is to misrepresent the account. They are given as warnings about faith, not as excuses to deny the promise.

On the other hand, there were times when every person was healed. The Gospel records that the crowds brought their sick to Jesus and that he healed them all. The book of Acts describes multitudes healed under the ministry of the apostles. Unbelief restricts in one setting, while faith produces complete healing in another. Where unbelief prevails, fewer receive. Where faith rises, all receive. The pattern repeats across Scripture. The presence of some resistance does not negate the truth of healing. It shows why the results vary.

For this reason, the minister must think in terms of success and not in terms of failure. The one who sees even a single healing has witnessed the kingdom at work. That instance stands as a guarantee that more will follow. To heal one person is to prove that the seed is alive. The seed does not remain alone. It grows. The correct response is to treat every case of healing as a stepping stone toward greater results. To dwell on failures, if they are failures at all, is to misdirect attention. You cannot always know what is happening beneath the surface. Perhaps those religious people who boast about their faith and holiness are the most wicked and faithless ones, so that they cannot receive from God. But you do know that healing belongs to the kingdom, and the kingdom grows.

The minister's focus must remain on the mission. The mission is to heal and to bring life. The opposition will always exist, but they are not the main audience. The sick who long for healing and the desperate who reach out in faith are the ones who matter. The critics will waste your time. The sufferers who place their confidence in God are the ones who will experience the power of the kingdom. A minister who spends his time sparring with detractors will accomplish little. A minister who sets his attention on compassion will see results. Healing multiplies when faith is met with power.

The logic of compassion drives the ministry forward. A person who is healed does not care about the arguments of detractors. His pain is gone and his body is free. His testimony makes the critic irrelevant. This means the minister must labor to preach truth and produce results. Each time the sick recover, the kingdom increases. Each time a person rises from the bed, the seed grows. The harvest spreads outward from every healing. Critics can shout from the sidelines, but their words do not heal a single person. Compassion carries authority, and healing answers the question in a way that empty words cannot.

Miracle healing promotes the growth of God's kingdom. The logic of the seed forbids stagnation. What begins in small form must grow. The thirtyfold leads to the sixty, and the sixty leads to the hundredfold. Success builds on success. The task of the minister is to persevere in faith and compassion. The opposition is irrelevant. The mission stays the same. The kingdom of God advances through healing, and the sick recover as faith lays hold of the promise.

Healing ministry is measured by the presence of life, not by the noise of detractors. Every person who rises in health testifies to the seed that grows into a great tree. The kingdom cannot fail. The sick will continue to recover, and the results will continue to multiply. From the small beginning comes a vast increase until the promise reaches its full measure. This is the way of the kingdom, and this is the way of healing.

Time and the Ordering of Life

Improving one's spiritual life is inseparable from the way one handles time. Every person has a limited amount of time, and it is easily consumed by distractions, demands, and the expectations of others. Spiritual growth requires a calm but decisive approach, where life is ordered around purpose rather than noise. The key is to establish control over what fills the days, rather than adding more activities. Without such control, a person may intend to grow in faith yet spend years consumed by trivialities.

The first step is to settle one's purpose. A vague desire for improvement rarely survives the pressure of daily interruptions, but a clear direction provides immediate guidance. A person who knows what he is about can recognize quickly whether an invitation or relationship advances his purpose or hinders it. Even a short, deliberate statement of intent creates a standard by which all claims on time may be measured. This is humility, shown in acknowledging that life is finite and must be shaped according to God's will and one's holy ambition, whereas arrogance refuses this acknowledgment. Those who lack this orientation slide into confusion, and they call it busyness, as if filling a day with activities is the same as living with purpose. But the humble man accepts his limitations and confines himself to what truly matters.

The way a person invests his time in relationships partially shapes the spiritual condition of his household. Time with family deserves priority, first with one's spouse and then with the children. The circle is established in faith and direction by the word of God, and outside voices gain influence only if the household grants them opportunity. Extended family, friends, and acquaintances either support this purpose or weaken it, and when they weaken it their access must be limited, or eliminated without a second thought. To regulate interaction is an act of responsibility. If others mistake it for cruelty, that changes nothing. Boundaries create two results: some relationships grow stronger through respect, and others fall away. Either result is better than allowing a household to be consumed by constant demands.

One must consider how time is given, because misplaced investment in others can distort the household's direction. Parents often allow destructive voices to linger out of tradition, loyalty, or fear of offending relatives. Responsibility before God requires them to guard the household from such intrusion and to speak the word of God to their children. The matter concerns the shaping of souls, not the loss of casual time. To refuse harmful voices is to protect the family entrusted by God

Beyond relationships, the other great consumer of time is amusement. Endless entertainment offers only a passing diversion and leaves little that strengthens faith or produces wisdom and maturity. Abandoning such waste recovers hours that can be given to prayer and to reading, to confessing faith, and to reflection. The point is to prevent amusement from competing with what strengthens the inner life. A man who treasures his time with God will find little attraction in passive diversions that leave nothing behind.

The danger of amusement lies in both its quantity and its quality. Entertainment parades values, attitudes, and worldviews opposed to faith, although its appeal succeeds only when a person chooses to give it time. Those who spend themselves on constant consumption, even if not overcome by it, willingly neglect the things of God. Refusing such diversions secures time for prayer and keeps the mind fixed on truth. A heart established in the word of God remains steady in prayer and strong in Scripture, but the one who neglects his faith for empty diversions might make his own pursuit of God grow cold.

The disciplined use of time is aided by structure. To schedule periods for prayer, reading, and reflection is to treat them as essential. A person who plans space for these pursuits gains stability. Instead of yielding to every interruption, he establishes rhythms that foster consistency. This rhythm produces steady growth and removes the sense of constantly reacting to the demands of others. A man who has ordered his time this way finds that prayer comes naturally, not as a careless habit, but because he has carved out the ground for it to flourish.

Structure also frees the mind. Those who refuse to plan often face the strain of deciding each step as it comes, with thoughts scattered by tasks and obligations. The one who arranges his time approaches the day with a greater sense of settledness, since many decisions are already in place. His mind is clear to attend to the present act of devotion, study, or work. Such structure produces liberty, because the strain of constant uncertainty has been lifted, yet it still leaves room for the freedom of spontaneous action.

For some, bold separation from distractions may be difficult at first. In that case, small adjustments can begin the process. One may shorten a visit, decline an invitation, or reduce needless conversations. Each act reclaims a portion of life that would have been lost, and over time these portions accumulate into meaningful freedom. As confidence grows, the person discovers that backlash quickly fades, or that it never mattered. Those who respect his boundaries remain, while others fall away. The result is peace and strength, where life no longer feels at the mercy of others but governed by purpose.

It is common for people to speak of balance, as if the ideal life is one where every demand receives its share of attention. But balance often becomes another word for compromise. What matters is priority, not equal distribution. Faith must take precedence over trivial pursuits, or they will be swallowed by them. Balance spreads a person thin; priority concentrates his strength.

To improve one's spiritual life requires handling time with seriousness, even a decisiveness that seems cruel to others. People and amusements often waste more of it than any other factor. To guard against this is obedience to God, who has given each life to be managed wisely, and it should never be mistaken for withdrawal from the world. When time is ordered around faith, close family, and calling, the soul is nourished. The household receives strength, and one's days become fruitful. The peace that follows comes as the reward of living with direction. This peace endures, because it is rooted in the knowledge that life is being spent on what matters most, under the command of God and in the power of his Spirit.

Tradition and Conscience

Conscience is often treated as a reliable guide in matters of truth and morality. People appeal to it when they want to justify themselves, and they fear it when they feel condemned. They speak as if to act against conscience is always to sin. Religion has reinforced this assumption, elevating the inner voice of the heart into an authority beside the word of God. The result has been generations who mistake sincerity for truth and inward peace for divine approval. But conscience is not knowledge. It is not God's voice, but the echo of what a person already believes. If the knowledge that informs it is false, then the voice of conscience will mislead. For this reason, Scripture insists that God is greater than our hearts. The conscience may excuse or accuse, but the standard remains God's revelation. When conscience and knowledge disagree, the Christian must walk by knowledge.

Conscience functions like a feeling in the heart. It is comparable to sensations in the body. If you press against a thorn, you feel pain. If you offend what your conscience has been trained to accept, you feel guilt. But as the body can send false signals, so the conscience can be inaccurate. Some diseases create pain when there is no injury, or hide pain when there is great injury. Likewise, conscience can generate false alarms or remain silent when guilt is real. Knowledge, however, is not a feeling. It is truth revealed by God in Scripture. If we know what God has spoken, then we have certainty. When the heart feels one way and the word of God says another, we must follow knowledge.

Paul himself demonstrates this distinction. He told the council that he had lived in all good conscience up to that day. This included his years as a Pharisee when he persecuted the church with zeal. At that time he was convinced that he ought to oppose the name of Jesus, and as to righteousness under the law he considered himself blameless. His conscience excused him because it had been shaped by false tradition. Later he confessed that he had acted ignorantly in unbelief. His sincerity was real, but what he believed was false. This shows the function of conscience: it measures sincerity, but only knowledge measures truth. Therefore, when Paul appealed to conscience, he was not claiming lifelong correctness, but lifelong consistency. His enemies could not accuse him of hypocrisy, but his own story proves that conscience has no authority apart from God's word.

Some may object by appealing to Romans 14, where Paul warns that to act against conscience is sin. But the context there is different. The matters under discussion, such as eating or drinking and the observance of days, are not sins in themselves. A man who believes they are wrong, and then does them anyway, shows a willingness to rebel against what he thinks is God's will. The sin lies in the disposition, not in the food or the day. But when God has spoken clearly, conscience cannot overrule revelation. To claim that murder or theft is justified because conscience approves is to overthrow the authority of God's law. Romans 14 does not make conscience the rule of faith. It proves again that conscience must be educated by knowledge. Paul's solution is not to leave people in ignorance, but to urge them to reach conviction by knowledge of the truth.

We see the same principle at work in religious tradition. People grow up trained by human customs, and these customs shape their conscience. They learn that it feels wrong to ask God for healing or prosperity, or other things that they want, even though the Bible promises them to the believer. Their heart complains when they pray for blessings, because tradition has conditioned them to think such prayers are selfish or irreverent. In reality, the false tradition has miseducated the conscience. The feeling of guilt is not the judgment of God but the residue of false teaching. If we follow that feeling, we reject what God has spoken.

The Christian must act on knowledge, not on feeling. If you know that God has promised healing, then pray for healing even if your heart hesitates. If your tradition whispers that it is wrong, then shout louder and pray with greater insistence. The conscience may accuse, but God has promised. If you know that God has promised prosperity, then speak and act on that knowledge, regardless of the inward complaint of guilt. Faith is not a feeling in the heart but knowledge of God's word. It is confidence in what God has spoken, not a sensation that fluctuates with upbringing and culture. To confuse conscience with faith is to make sincerity equal to truth, and that is the very error that once deceived Paul.

Some believers feel timid or even guilty about sharing the gospel, because their background has taught them that it is wrong to "impose" their beliefs on others. Their conscience protests when they speak about Christ, as if obedience to his command were somehow offensive. But Jesus has spoken plainly, "Go and make disciples of all nations." To remain silent because of a troubled conscience is to disobey Christ. The feeling of guilt is false. The conscience has been trained by human opinion, not by Scripture. Knowledge must prevail. Even if the heart hesitates, the command of Christ requires action.

The principle is simple when applied to obvious sins. If you feel anger and want to kill someone, your conscience may not stop you, but the law of God says, "You shall not murder." You do not obey your feelings; you obey God. If you feel greed and desire to steal, or you want to lie to get what you crave, the Bible forbids it. Your feelings do not matter. You submit to knowledge. In the same way, if you feel guilt when you ask for what God has promised, the guilt itself is false. Your heart may complain, but you must obey God's word instead of your feelings.

The conscience must be educated by the word of God. As the mind is renewed, the heart gradually learns to align its reactions with the truth. But obedience is required immediately, not at some future point when the feelings have finally changed. You cannot wait until conscience approves before you obey the Bible. If you already know the truth, then your duty is clear. Faith rests on knowledge. Feelings must follow, but they do not define belief.

In prayer this distinction is critical. A man may feel it is wrong to ask God for healing, blessing, or prosperity. His conscience protests because tradition has trained it to protest. But he knows from Scripture that God commands him to ask, and promises to answer. What then should he do? He should pray according to knowledge, not according to conscience. He should pray with confidence, not with hesitation. He should resist the false guilt of his heart, and insist with all

his conviction on what God has spoken. To let conscience rule is to enthrone ignorance. To let knowledge rule is to walk by faith.

Paul's experience confirms this. When his knowledge was false, his conscience excused him while he persecuted Christ. When his knowledge was true, his conscience bore witness to his integrity as an apostle. Sincerity without truth is still sin. Conscience is never the rule of faith. It is only a reflection of the beliefs already held in the mind. Therefore, conscience must be taught, tested, and corrected by the word of God.

The Christian life depends on this principle. If we trust our conscience, we will be enslaved to false guilt and false comfort, and we will mistake tradition for truth. If we trust God's word, we will stand firm regardless of what the heart feels. The word of God is the measure of faith and practice. Conscience must be trained to submit, and tradition must be cast down when it contradicts revelation. Victory comes when we walk by knowledge, not by feeling. God is greater than our hearts. He is greater than tradition. His word is final, and his word alone defines truth.

Trojan Orthodoxy and the Sin unto Death

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.” (Mark 3:22-30)

A man commits the unpardonable sin when he attributes the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil. The scribes did this when they looked at the miracles of Jesus and said that he worked by the power of demons. Their mouths condemned them. They committed blasphemy against the Spirit, and Jesus declared that such a sin would never be forgiven. What happened then continues to happen now. The Spirit works through the disciples of Jesus, through ordinary believers, through men and women who heal the sick, cast out demons, and speak in tongues. When someone looks at these works and calls them evil, or dismisses them as frauds, or attributes them to Satan, he blasphemes the Spirit. Even if he avoids naming Jesus, even if his words are aimed at the disciples or the practice itself, he speaks against the Spirit, because the Spirit is the one who performs the work.

The gravity of this sin is beyond dispute. If a person looks as if he has committed the unpardonable sin, the implication is direct: move on. Leave him alone. Do not waste time reasoning with him or attempting to correct him. God himself has abandoned him. He is doomed to hell, and Jesus has made it plain that forgiveness will never be granted to such a man. The believer does not need to treat him as a seeker, nor as one who might still turn. The sentence is final, and our obligation toward him is removed. We may even say that we have no right to continue treating him as if hope remained. God has spoken, and to disregard this would be to resist God.

This runs parallel to what the apostle John wrote about a sin leading to death. He says that we do not even need to pray for such a sin. Samuel acted in the same way when God told him to stop mourning for Saul. The prophet was told to move on, because God had rejected the king. When a man crosses the line into the unpardonable sin, he publicly declares himself as reprobate. Normally we cannot tell who belongs to the elect and who belongs to the reprobate, so we preach to all, testify to all, and endure much opposition in the process. But the man who blasphemes the Spirit has identified himself. He has removed the veil and declared his own judgment. For him, the case is closed.

Still, we should acknowledge that identifying reprobates is ordinarily impossible. Even the most hardened atheist might repent. A philosopher who mocks the faith might one day confess Christ. Many enemies of the gospel have become saints, because God chose them and called them at the appointed time. This means that we cannot dismiss someone merely because of his hostility. What we can dismiss, however, is the man who blasphemes the Spirit in the manner that Jesus described. There is no forgiveness for him, no possibility of repentance, no reason to waste another word. In fact, many "Christian" teachers and preachers do exactly this when they write books or preach sermons against the works of the Spirit. They sneer at healing. They ridicule tongues. They mock prophecy. They scorn any manifestation of divine power. They label it demonic, superstitious, or fraudulent. By doing so, they commit the very sin that Jesus pronounced unpardonable. The atheist philosopher may repent, but the so-called Christian teacher who blasphemes the Spirit will never repent. He is damned already.

This raises a pressing question: should we forgive a sin that God himself will never forgive? The answer is obvious. Forgiveness is not a matter of personal feeling, as if we could grant something that God denies. To speak of forgiving the unpardonable sin is meaningless. We do not have the ability or the right to override the decree of God. To pretend otherwise is a charade. It is merely going through the motion of forgiveness while ignoring the fact that God has already condemned the person to eternal fire. To forgive what God will never forgive is to exalt our sentiment over divine judgment, and that is itself a form of rebellion. The believer must agree with God. Where God condemns, we condemn. Where God withholds forgiveness, we withhold forgiveness.

The great danger today is that much of what is called orthodoxy functions as a Trojan horse for hell. It comes with beautiful creeds, polished confessions, and venerable traditions. Everything looks proper from the outside. It enters into the church with an air of dignity, and men welcome it without suspicion. But inside it carries the enemy. Unbelief sneaks out, slits your throat, ransacks the city, and burns the temple. This has been the story for centuries, and it remains the story now. Historic orthodoxy has been the vehicle for unbelief, cloaked in the name of tradition. Against this counterfeit we proclaim an authentic orthodoxy, built on Christ and alive with the Spirit. We have no interest in the lifeless horse of man-made religion. We refuse to host unbelief, no matter how ancient, no matter how polished. True orthodoxy is no less historic, but it is not of the flesh. It is of faith. It is as old as Abraham, as sure as the prophets, as powerful as Christ himself, and as enduring as the Spirit who works through the church.

The doctrine of election confirms the certainty of salvation for the chosen, but it offers no comfort to the one who blasphemes the Spirit. The decree of God does not secure a man against the Spirit's judgment in practice. If you commit the unpardonable sin, you are not elect. If you blaspheme the Spirit, you have never been a Christian. Election is proved by faith, not by presumption. Those who have never done this sin are safe only in the sense that they have not done it. Their election shows itself in perseverance, in faith, in submission to the Spirit. Those who cross the line show themselves reprobate by their own mouths. The doctrine of election

stands, but it leaves no place for presumption or carelessness. The only assurance is that the believer has never committed this sin, and by God's grace he never will.

Therefore the counsel of Jesus remains urgent. When the Spirit works, honor him. When the Spirit heals, rejoice. When the Spirit gives tongues and prophecy, give thanks. When the Spirit performs signs, glorify God. And when a man rises to sneer, to slander, to ascribe these things to the devil, recognize him for what he is. He has condemned himself. He has revealed his destiny. Do not waste another word on him. Do not pray for him. Do not pity him. Leave him to his sentence. God has spoken.

Increase Our Faith

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” (Luke 17:5–6)

The apostles made a request that has echoed through the centuries. They cried out to Jesus, “Increase our faith.” The words sound noble, but they conceal confusion. They had heard his demand that they forgive their brother seven times in a single day if he repented. Confronted with the impossibility of such obedience, they assumed the solution was to accumulate a larger reserve of faith. Their instinct was right in recognizing that faith was the key, but their imagination of what faith is and how it operates was distorted. They thought in terms of volume, as though more faith could be stacked upon less, and once enough had been stored, obedience would become possible.

Jesus corrected them with a striking reply. He told them that if they had faith like a mustard seed, they could command a tree to uproot and plant itself in the sea, and it would obey. His words were an assurance rather than an appeal for microscopic increments of faith. The smallest particle of true faith already draws upon the omnipotence of God. Faith works by connection rather than accumulation. It joins the believer to the power of God, and that power does not vary by degree. A mustard seed remains a mustard seed, yet if it is real, it accesses the infinite. Jesus was not describing faith as a fragment surrounded by doubt. He was describing faith in its pure form, however small it appears. As he also said in another place, the one who believes and “shall not doubt in his heart” will see the mountain move.

This shows why so many commentaries miss the point. They divert into moral lessons about duty or wander into irrelevant digressions about discipleship as servanthood. Jesus directly answered the request. The apostles thought they needed more faith, but Jesus told them they needed real faith. Their weakness called for recognition of what faith is, rather than an increase in volume.

Faith is the principle that governs the believer’s life with God. It is by faith that ministry becomes effective, healing becomes certain, obedience becomes possible, and endurance becomes firm. Faith is the difference between a life dragged along by defeat and a life carried forward by divine strength. The power of faith rests in its object rather than in human resolve or the intensity of inward feelings. To believe the word of God is to place oneself in line with his power and promise. A small faith in a faithful God accomplishes more than a great striving in the imagination of man.

There is, of course, a biblical sense in which faith grows. Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ, and as the spirit is filled with revelation, the capacity of faith expands. Faith that begins as a mustard seed can branch into a tree, but this is because God’s word nourishes it, not because man has mastered a technique. Growth in faith is real, but it remains the gift of God. It comes through his word and his Spirit, not from introspection or human effort.

The mistake comes when faith itself becomes the focus of labor, as though the believer were a slave assigned to feed faith rather than faith serving the believer in his obedience to God. Some treat faith as a burden, endlessly occupied with maintaining it, doubting it, and measuring it, until faith itself becomes the problem. This is as absurd as buying a car that breaks down so often it consumes more energy to repair than it provides in use. A car is meant to carry you to your destination, not demand that you carry it. Faith functions the same way. It is the vehicle of divine power. It carries the believer forward in life and ministry. To reverse this order is to lose the meaning of faith altogether.

Faith is always the solution, never the burden. It never enslaves the believer into cycles of self-analysis but always sets him free to obey God's command. It is the power that heals the sick, forgives the offender, withstands persecution, and overcomes the world. Jesus never reproved anyone for too much faith. He rebuked unbelief and little faith, but the mustard seed shows that even the smallest true faith is more than sufficient. Certainly, it is better to have more faith, but any real faith is a good start.

The apostles asked for an increase. Jesus taught them that a particle of real faith contains infinite increase, because it connects to God himself. The believer must therefore refuse to let faith become a burden. He must let it serve its intended role, carrying him into obedience, ministry, and triumph. When the request "increase our faith" arises again in the heart, it must be answered with the remembrance that faith itself is God's gift, and that even the smallest measure is the key to the impossible.

Jesus at the Door

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

These words of Christ have often been treated as if they were spoken to unbelievers, a general call for outsiders to invite him into their lives. Preachers have used the image of Jesus knocking on the door of a sinner's heart, waiting for permission to enter. This is often effective, since any attempt to call the elect would result in some conversions. But the text itself reveals a very different setting. The words appear in the message to the church of Laodicea, a congregation that had grown complacent and useless. The image of Jesus knocking delivers a sharp warning to a community of professing believers who had settled into spiritual lethargy. It confronts them directly, rather than serving as a sentimental picture of him pleading with the world.

Laodicea had considered itself rich and self-sufficient. In material terms the city was prosperous, and the church reflected the same attitude. They thought they lacked nothing. Jesus described them as lukewarm, a condition so offensive that he said he was ready to spit them out of his mouth. Their complacency blinded them to their real state. They were wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. The words of Jesus in this passage are not an open-ended invitation to outsiders but a demand that his people repent of their pride and return to fellowship with him.

The image of Jesus knocking communicates confrontation, urgency, and promise in one act. The Lord should have been within the church, dwelling among his people, but Laodicea had shut him out by its complacency. The knock exposes this reversal. It is the sound of Jesus confronting those who claimed his name but excluded his presence. The knock also presses upon the conscience. It is an interruption that demands attention and forces a response, far more than a mere whisper. Whether a person opens or remains closed reveals the condition of his heart and whether the grace of God is at work. At the same time, the knock carries the assurance of communion. Christ declares that if anyone opens, he will enter and eat with him. To eat together in biblical language is to share covenant fellowship, reconciliation, and joy. The knock is therefore both a warning and a promise, a disclosure of divine sovereignty and a summons to repentance. Jesus speaks, and God's elect respond, while the reprobate remain hardened in their refusal.

When Jesus says he stands at the door and knocks, he is not portraying himself as a helpless visitor hoping for a welcome. He confronts a church with his authority. He warns that if they persist in their false confidence, he will expose and judge them. Yet he also promises that those who respond will enjoy renewed communion with him. To eat with Christ is to share in his fellowship, his life, and his blessing. The image is corrective and confronts complacency directly. It points beyond religious curiosity or casual interest to a decisive return, moving from complacency to communion and from pride to repentance.

This passage also teaches the relation between God's sovereignty and human response. The call of Christ reaches the ear, but whether the door is opened depends on the grace of God. Those who hear and repent do so because God causes their hearts to turn. Those who remain lukewarm and closed demonstrate their reprobation. Divine sovereignty is not absent from this picture. Christ commands the church, and God grants repentance to those whom he has chosen.

The will of man appears in this text, but not as an autonomous power. The will is the faculty by which choices are made, but every movement of the will comes from God's determination. To open the door to Christ is the effect of divine grace, rather than an independent act of human initiative. If the will were not real, there would be nothing to govern, but if the will were independent, there would be no need for God's grace. Scripture teaches that God is the cause of all things, including the decisions of man. Jesus knocks, and those whom God calls to repentance respond. Jesus knocks, and those whom God leaves in their blindness remain closed and condemned.

There are those who think that the doctrine of God's sovereignty makes repentance unnecessary. Some reason that if God has chosen, then there is nothing to do, and they settle into passivity. But their very passivity proves that grace is absent. When God's grace is at work, it produces faith, repentance, and renewed obedience. The one who truly understands divine sovereignty does not sit idle. He sees that God's power operates through the human will, causing it to choose rightly. When a man opens the door to Christ, it is because God has moved his heart. When a man keeps the door shut, it is because God has left him in his obstinacy.

The promise that Jesus will eat with the one who opens is the promise of restored fellowship. In biblical language, to eat together is to share life and covenant. For the believer who repents of complacency, this means renewed vitality, restored usefulness, and intimate communion with the Lord. Jesus speaks of real participation in his life and blessing, far beyond vague religious feelings. Those who repent by God's grace experience the joy of his presence and the power of his Spirit. They are no longer lukewarm, but active and fruitful.

For us today, this passage is a warning against the presumption that often comes with comfort and stability. A church may appear outwardly strong, wealthy, and influential, while in truth it is spiritually barren. Individuals may imagine that they are fine, that they need nothing, when Jesus himself declares them poor and blind. The knock at the door is the word of God exposing this delusion. When God's grace is present, the word convicts and leads to repentance. When his grace is absent, the word only confirms the hardness of the reprobate.

The force of this text lies in its sharp confrontation. It delivers Christ's address to a church that had become useless, commanding repentance and warning of rejection. At the same time, it carries the promise of renewed communion to those whom God moves to respond. The knock is grace, and the opening is also grace. Christ speaks, and those whom God calls hear and obey. The result is restored fellowship and blessing.

On Mental Victory

Human life follows the direction of thought. A person's beliefs about God direct his judgments and shape his decisions. They govern his conduct as well. The mind never stands neutral. It either lives in the light of truth or sinks under the shadow of deception. Thought rules life, and whatever a person accepts in his mind soon governs his actions. For this reason, Scripture presents the fight of faith in intellectual terms. Paul wrote that arguments and pretensions rise up against the knowledge of God. He devoted his apostolic work to demolishing these strongholds and to taking every thought captive to obey Christ. Victory in the Christian life begins when truth rules the mind.

Paul's words in 2 Corinthians are often applied as a private method of discipline, as if each believer must chase down stray thoughts and force them into submission. Believers should guard their thoughts and bring them under the authority of Christ. One may use Paul's statement in this way, provided his original intent remains clear. In context, he defended his ministry against opponents who exalted themselves with lofty reasoning against the gospel. The "strongholds" he described referred to entrenched systems of false belief. He aimed to dismantle them by preaching the word of God and to bring whole minds into obedience to Christ. His words describe the overthrow of false doctrines through proclamation of truth, not a technique for chasing mental impressions.

Satan's work also comes into focus here. He governs by deception rather than by extraordinary displays or outward spectacle. People reject the sufficiency of Christ and accept lies in its place. False teaching corrupts their doctrine, and distortion reshapes their perception of reality. Fears already resolved in the gospel return in exaggerated form. Burdens Christ removed are laid upon them again. Satan's strategy begins in thought, and by shaping thought he governs life. The confrontation against him takes place in reasoning and belief, where lies fall and truth prevails.

Paul's description of his ministry sets the pattern for Christian preaching and teaching. The preacher addresses arguments, exposes assumptions, and confronts doctrines. Ministry does not attempt to affect atmospheres or stir emotions. To preach is to confront the reasoning of people, overturn what contradicts God's revelation, and establish the knowledge of Christ in its place. Paul called the word of God the sword of the Spirit. This sword pierces through falsehood and exposes what had been hidden in darkness. When this work takes place, thoughts submit to Christ, and his victory extends into the mind.

Although Paul's words describe his apostolic ministry, they reveal how truth operates in all who believe. The Christian life rests on the submission of thought to God's word, not on vague religious feeling. Faith receives what God has spoken and allows his revelation to direct judgment in every matter. Transformation begins when knowledge is renewed. Old conclusions give way to the truth of Christ, and the mind itself becomes the territory of his reign.

Anxiety lingers in many Christians because their thoughts have not been corrected by God's promises. A person enslaved to sin remains bound because he has not reasoned through the fact that Christ's death and resurrection secured freedom. Every failure reduces to this same point: the word of God has not been granted full authority over thought. Victory comes when the mind receives divine revelation and refuses every competing claim.

Paul's words also define the kind of ministry the church must pursue. Outward participation or stirring delivery cannot measure success. The measure lies in whether false reasoning has been overthrown and truth has taken its place. If preaching leaves assumptions untouched, it fails in its task, no matter how inspiring the sound. But when minds are reshaped and reasoning bows to Christ, the gospel has reached its goal.

The gospel of Jesus Christ brings mental victory. The word of God accomplishes this by confronting thought and demanding obedience. Ritual does not achieve it. Techniques of self-discipline do not produce it. Paul's example makes the pattern clear. He brought down arguments and strongholds alike, and brought every thought under the rule of Christ. At that point the believer no longer follows deception. He thinks in line with God's revelation, and his life displays the wisdom and freedom that follow.

The triumph of the gospel appears most fully in this transformation. It begins in the mind, where deception falls and truth prevails. From there, conduct and character take their form. Mental victory means the reign of Christ directing human reasoning, the renewal of knowledge in accord with his word, and the liberation of thought from every lie. Paul bore witness to this victory in his ministry, and the same victory appears wherever the gospel captures the mind and makes it obedient to Christ.

Riches Without Sorrow

The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22)

The proverb announces a principle that penetrates to the foundation of life. Wealth may come by many channels, but true enrichment comes only by the blessing of the Lord. It is not toil, shrewdness, or worldly scheming that determines the outcome. God himself makes rich, and when he does, there is no grief attached to it. This claim stands in sharp contrast to other ways of seeking wealth. Paul wrote that those who desire riches fall into temptation and are pierced through with many sorrows. The Scriptures present two distinct paths. One is enrichment by blessing, which comes with peace and usefulness. The other is enrichment by corruption, which carries sorrow, ruin, and destruction.

The first truth to note is the source of enrichment. The proverb attributes wealth to the blessing of the Lord. Blessing means his favor, his approval, his empowerment. It is not merely a pleasant wish but an effectual bestowal of good. When the Lord blesses, things flourish. His word brings fruitfulness, his favor causes increase, and his promise ensures permanence. Human effort may accompany this, but the decisive factor is the blessing itself. Toil without blessing ends in futility. Labor driven by corruption ends in ruin. Worldly wisdom says that wealth comes by strategy, by negotiation, by leveraging power or securing advantage. Scripture says otherwise. It insists that enrichment rests upon the blessing of God, and that those who receive it cannot be denied prosperity.

Divine blessing makes rich. The richness envisioned focuses on material wealth, but it is not limited to money or possessions. Richness by blessing reaches to the whole life of a person. It gives strength, peace, honor, and fruitfulness. The righteous under blessing enjoy a secure and lasting wealth. It is not the fleeting gain of thieves or the fragile fortune of gamblers. Ungodly wealth collapses when the scheme fails or when judgment falls. The blessing of God builds riches that endure.

With this blessing, no sorrow is added. The word for sorrow conveys the sense of grief, pain, regret, or vexation. Wealth gained apart from God's blessing carries hidden curses. The one who builds by oppression must live with enemies and the fear of disaster. The one who gains by lies is never safe from exposure and disgrace. Even if he enjoys his riches for a season, his mind is tormented and his conscience unquiet. Blessing enriches in a different manner. It supplies wealth without the sting of regret and without the ruin of grief. It brings increase without hidden loss. It raises a man up and does not destroy him in the process.

Scripture illustrates this in both examples and counterexamples. Abraham became very rich in livestock, silver, and gold, and this was attributed to the Lord's blessing. Isaac sowed in the land and reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. Jacob also confessed that God's blessing gave him prosperity. Israel as a nation entered a land flowing with milk and honey as the result of God's promise. These are pictures of wealth produced by God's blessing. In contrast, Achan stole from the spoil of Jericho, and his whole household was destroyed. Gehazi

took money from Naaman by deceit, and the leprosy of Naaman clung to him forever. Judas sold his Master for silver, and ended in despair and suicide. These men pursued riches by corruption, and they were pierced through with sorrows.

The contrast between Proverbs 10:22 and Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 6:9–10 reinforces the lesson. The proverb proclaims that blessing makes rich without sorrow. Paul warns that those who crave riches apart from God fall into ruin and destruction. He describes men who used religion as a scheme for gain, but in doing so they destroyed themselves. The point is not that any desire for increase is evil. The problem lies in pursuing riches through ungodly means. When men forsake the blessing of God and chase wealth by corruption, they gain nothing but grief. When they trust in his blessing, they receive prosperity that is wholesome and free from destruction.

This has practical implications for Christians. We should seek increase by faith in God's blessing, not by manipulation, deceit, or exploitation. The test of wealth is its source and its fruit. Does it arise from the blessing of God, or from corruption and sin? Does it produce peace, or does it bring anxiety and ruin? The believer is called to trust that God's blessing enriches, and that this enrichment is marked by peace and usefulness. To live by faith means to expect prosperity from him, and to refuse the shortcuts of dishonesty and oppression. It means to affirm that true wealth is anchored in his favor, and that without it, no accumulation can stand.

When a person pursues wealth by his own schemes, he pierces himself with sorrow. The gains may be real in appearance, but the hidden grief cannot be removed. He must struggle to protect what he has taken. He must suffer the bitterness of relationships ruined by greed. He must live under the shadow of loss. When a person trusts the blessing of God, he receives increase that does not rot his soul. His wealth is useful, not destructive. It carries joy, not grief. It becomes a means of blessing others, not a trap for himself.

The truth of the proverb is not confined to ancient Israel or to a few patriarchs. It remains in force because it reflects the nature of God's favor. He gives wealth as blessing to his people, and when he does, he does not add sorrow. To believe this is to reject the philosophies of the world, which make human effort the measure of success. It is also to resist the corruptions of religion, which often entice men to use spiritual things for personal gain. The blessing of God enriches in a manner that is wholesome, lasting, and free from grief. The way of wisdom is to seek the blessing of God in faith, rejecting the schemes of the world. Scripture calls us to trust the Lord as the one who makes rich, and to rest in the promise that his enrichment is accompanied by peace and usefulness.

Theology of the Throne

The progress of redemption cannot be understood if we view it only from the cross. The crucifixion was necessary for the forgiveness of sins, but the Scripture insists that the decisive placement of Christ, and of the church in him, is at the throne of God. It is this enthronement that defines the present age. To recognize this is to understand the real position of the Christian life. We are not standing at the foot of the cross as if history had stopped there, nor are we waiting outside the empty tomb as if resurrection were the end. The gospel announces that Jesus Christ has ascended and now sits at the right hand of the Father, and that those who belong to him are seated with him in the heavenly places. Redemption is fulfilled in enthronement, and the believer participates in this reality now.

The cross remains the foundation of salvation. Jesus bore the penalty of sin, satisfied divine justice, and secured eternal reconciliation. To diminish this would be to diminish the gospel itself. Yet the New Testament never allows us to halt at this stage of the narrative. The resurrection verified his victory over death and vindicated his claim as the Son of God. But even resurrection is not the terminus of redemption. The apostles bear witness that God exalted Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority. The enthronement is the act that installs Christ as king and head over all things, and it is in this position that the church receives its identity. Forgiveness at the cross and life in the resurrection lead to authority in the throne, and this is where the Christian stands today.

Ephesians 2:6 declares that God has “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The language is not future but past. It speaks of an accomplished act. Paul does not say that believers will be seated with Christ after the resurrection of the body, although that remains true, but that they already share in his enthronement. This is a statement of present reality, grounded in union with him. If Christ reigns at the right hand of God, then the church in him reigns also. This must reshape how the Christian conceives of life and calling. Faith is not a desperate attempt to cling to a crucified Savior who has not yet triumphed, but a confident participation in the reign of one who now possesses all authority in heaven and on earth.

Colossians 3:1 confirms this perspective: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” The imperative follows from an indicative. Because believers have been raised with Christ, they are commanded to set their minds on things above. The mind and life of the Christian must be throne-oriented. To live as if we are still awaiting enthronement is to deny what God has accomplished. The call to holiness, prayer, and perseverance assumes a present identity with Christ in his reign. This is why Paul can say that sin shall not have dominion over us. Dominion has shifted, and the believer now participates in the dominion of Christ.

The throne is also the proper vantage point for the church’s mission. Too often the church imagines itself as weak, embattled, and marginal, clinging to survival until the end. But this

picture contradicts the apostolic testimony. Jesus reigns now, and the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. From the throne proceeds authority to preach, to heal, and to confront the powers of darkness. When the apostles prayed for boldness in Acts 4, they grounded their plea in the recognition that Christ had taken his seat in heaven and that the nations were subject to him. Their confidence did not rest in their numbers or in their strategies but in their position with Christ in his reign. Miracles, signs, and wonders accompanied their ministry. They were not laboring under the shadow of the cross but acting under the authority of the throne.

Psalm 110 prophesies this enthronement: “The Lord says to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” This verse is the most frequently quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament, precisely because it describes the present reign of Christ. The enemies remain active, but they are destined for subjugation under his feet. The church lives in this in-between period, but the enthronement itself is already achieved. This eschatological structure explains how the Christian can both reign and suffer, both triumph and endure opposition. The throne is real and present, but the final display of its power awaits the last day. Even so, the church is called to live from enthronement rather than toward enthronement, since its life is now bound to the risen and exalted Christ.

Hebrews 1 strengthens the point by contrasting Christ’s enthronement with angelic subordinates: “After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The purgation of sin at the cross was the prerequisite, but the enthronement was the result. To say that he “sat down” signals completion and authority. His mediatorial work continues, but the decisive act has been done. When Hebrews 12 calls believers to run the race by looking to Jesus, it describes him as the one who has endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. The exhortation is throne-centered. The Christian life is sustained by the recognition of Christ enthroned, not by imagining that the decisive act still remains in suspense.

A theology of the throne guards against distortions that arise from an incomplete focus. If the cross becomes the sole reference point, Christianity risks degenerating into perpetual guilt and weakness, as if believers must linger forever at the site of sacrifice without grasping the triumph that followed. If resurrection becomes the terminus, Christianity risks being reduced to a vague message of hope or vitality, detached from concrete authority. The throne alone secures the full picture. It proclaims forgiveness, life, and rule, integrated in the one who now reigns. It assures the believer that every prayer, every act of faith, and every work of the gospel proceeds from heavenly authority already established.

This perspective also reshapes the church’s relation to the world. History is not driven by empires or economies but by the enthroned Christ. The church does not need to mimic the systems of the world because it already participates in the authority that governs them. This explains Paul’s insistence that the wisdom of the world cannot overthrow the wisdom of God. The church speaks with confidence, not because of social power, but because of its

participation in the throne. Even apparent weakness is transformed when seen from this perspective, since the outcome is determined by the authority of Christ who reigns above all.

The eschatological dimension remains. The throne is real now, but the final submission of all enemies is still to come. Believers reign with Christ, but they also endure opposition. They exercise authority, but they also await consummation. The New Testament does not deny either aspect. Instead, it calls the church to live faithfully from its throne-identity until the day when enthronement is visible to all creation. Revelation 3:21 offers this promise: "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne." The sequence is already established, and the future extension of this reign is guaranteed.

The theology of the throne presents the present identity of the believer. Redemption moves from cross to resurrection to enthronement, and the enthronement is decisive for the church today. We are not merely forgiven sinners clinging to the cross, nor are we only witnesses to an empty tomb. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. This is our position, our authority, and our calling. To live with throne-consciousness is to understand the true nature of the Christian life and the true place of the church in history. It is to embrace the reality that Christ reigns and that we reign in him.