

TRACE

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1. On Unbeliefism

We must threaten all teachers of unbelief in the name of Jesus. This includes the cessationists, but not only the cessationists. Cessationism is often discussed, because it is a known controversy, and there is a clear term for it. However, it is also a basic issue, so that even after a person has overcome cessationism, he has made only a little progress. It has become more popular than before to admit the gifts on paper, but that is insufficient. It could even be a deceptive position, because here is where people tell themselves that they finally believe what Scripture teaches, but the problem is that they still refuse to do what it says. James wrote that if we look at the word of God but do not obey the word of God, we deceive ourselves. We think that we are doing something, but we are doing nothing. We feel that we honor the gospel, but we dishonor it even more.

The gospel requires us to not merely affirm the gifts of the Spirit in our doctrine, but to aggressively teach and exercise them. Even after this, very much unbelief could remain beyond the category of spiritual gifts. For example, even after a person has been convinced about the gift of healing, and even after he has witnessed it or even performed healing by such a gift, he might still remain unconvinced that healing has been secured for the present time by the atonement, and that it is promised to faith, and it is to be received apart from any gift. This truth is even more basic to the gospel than the spiritual gifts, but it is denied even more than the spiritual gifts, and even by those who operate in the spiritual gifts. Then, it is evident that Christians have not attained to the point where they can pray with confidence, "Give us this day our daily bread." And they outright reject the teaching of Jesus, that if we would seek first the kingdom of God, then "all these things" the pagans seek will be added to us.

Remember that these were teachings that were given even before Jesus ascended to the cross and then to heaven, and before he poured out the Holy Spirit to empower his people. This is how far the church has fallen. Christians still do not believe what Jesus expected his pre-crucifixion followers to believe. And yet many of these people are obsessed with technical points of Christian theology and philosophy, deeming themselves faithful and strong in apologetics and such things. As for the teachings about those who are "in Christ," what about the doctrine that we are the righteousness of God in him? Sin consciousness pervades their doctrine and their religion, but the writer of Hebrews says that those who have been cleansed should no longer have a consciousness of sin. To keep preaching and even insisting on a consciousness of sin is not humility, but it is to relegate the blood of Christ to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. It is easy to find among them tomes of hundreds of pages about repentance, depression, and melancholy, but we cannot find one that talks much about our standing as the righteousness of God, that as Paul said, we shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. If this is not a denial of the gospel, what does it take? And they are the ones who condemn people.

We have offered several examples, but the list of items appears endless. There is not a common term to cover all of this. Again, cessationism is a common discussion because people are familiar with it, and there is such a convenient term for it. But there is a whole

realm of unbelief beyond the rejection of the gifts of the Spirit, and most people do not even think about it. Among us, we have often referred to it, translated from the Chinese, as "teachings of unbelief" or "teachings of no-faith" or "teachings of not-faith" (more literally, "not-faith teachings"). And we refer to the people as "people of unbelief" or "people of no-faith" or "people of not-faith" (or, "not-faith people"). This is not the same as when we call people "non-Christians" or "unbelievers," although some of them are indeed non-Christians and unbelievers. We have sometimes used terms like defeatism, deformed theology, and so on. But I think unbeliefism, no-faith, and not-faith are better as more permanent terms. These would cover the whole spectrum of "Christian" unbelief, encompassing those things that belong to the gospel, including the gifts of the Spirit, which also come under the gospel.

All unbelief is of the devil. Those who teach unbelief, we must rebuke harshly, so that they may be sound in the faith. For if they deny the promises in Scripture concerning this or that thing, claiming that they mean something different, then how can they retain the promises in Scripture concerning their salvation? Any principle of interpretation that they use to discard one set of promises in Scripture must also be applied to the promises of salvation, and the result is that they would exegete themselves right out of the kingdom of heaven and into hellfire, where there is screaming and gnashing of teeth. They invent their own theories, frameworks, and assumptions, and impose them upon the word of God, in order to replace the commands of God with the traditions of men. As the apostle warned, if anyone adds to the words of this book, God will add to him the plagues that would come, and if anyone takes away from the words of this book, God will remove his name from the book of life.

Yet they are fearless, not having the fear of God in them, acting as if they can do no wrong. When we expose them with an exact representation of their doctrine, and reveal the devastating outcome of their folly, they complain that we have attacked a straw man. The truth is that we grasp their doctrine better than they do, and also perceive all the angles and results of their doctrine. The complaint of misrepresentation, when they have not been misrepresented, signals to me that they have been exposed, and that they are defenseless against us. A straw man strategy can go both ways. True, if you attack someone using a straw man, you would appear unfair and uninformed. But if you defend yourself using a straw man, you are exposed as feeble and stupid, as if your opponent is exactly correct about you. They have not suffered a straw man attack, but they are using a straw man defense. Let them make this complaint on the day of judgment! Let them use the straw man defense before the throne of God!

There are prominent personalities on their side, Christian celebrities. And they profit from the people with the teachings of unbelief and defeat. They comfort the people, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace, and "This is a gift from God," when God himself calls it a curse. Then they pose a false dilemma and say that the promises of God, from the Father who "knows that you need all these things," in fact aim too low and promise too little, but that they would look toward the "higher" promises instead. This is a pious-sounding excuse for a rejection of the blood of Jesus Christ. If you castigate the explicit promises of the gospel as too low, too unholy, too worldly, then you are no longer a Christian preacher. You are preaching some other gospel, and some other religion. Look! You can only push

so far until you are proved a reprobate. Is God the God of heaven, and not of earth? Is he the God of the hills, and not of the valley? This sort of underhanded theology is unacceptable. Many people's plain scriptural sense is short-circuited by big names, but this is idolatry. God is no respecter of persons. Grow up! If you are going to be a leader to God's people, you will have to grow up, get smart, and stop playing self-righteous religious games with the word of God.

If we are satisfied with a teacher like this, a teacher of no-faith, then we are satisfied with too little, when we can have much more. The church of Jesus Christ is not where it should be at this time, but it is not entirely impoverished. We do not need teachers who would teach the gospel with unbelief, if it is the gospel at all, when we have teachers who teach the gospel with faith. Now this leads us to the fact that it is even more important to preach the truth of the gospel, than it is to refute and attack those who reject it. Jesus said that when a demon is cast out from a man, if he comes back and finds the place empty, he would return with other demons more evil than himself, so that the final condition of the man is worse than the first. Some teachers of no-faith wish to appear as vigilant for the truth of the gospel, but listen to them — they preach the politics of man instead of the promises of God. As the Scripture says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." Let us, therefore, after we have taken our stand against unbelief, devote more of our effort toward building up the people of God.

Finally, whatever is of faith, of power, of the Spirit, whatever is of hope, of victory, of righteousness, whatever is of love, of joy, of peace, whatever is of praise, of wisdom, of forgiveness, whatever is of thanksgiving, of healing, of abundance, and whatever is of the gospel of Jesus Christ, think on these things. For if you will believe and teach these things, you will do well. May the faith and power of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

From: Letters

2. The "Already / Not Yet" Fallacy

Here we refer again to the "already / not yet" fallacy. It is one of the common theological scams. Jesus Christ — by his life, death, and resurrection — has secured for us all the blessings promised by redemption. Nevertheless, some blessings are intended for this life, while other blessings are reserved for the next life. To refer to something that is reserved for the future as if it is intended for the present would result in doctrinal error and spiritual frustration. Although the principle seems correct, it is often used to commit heresy by denying the promises of God. In some contexts, it is used almost exclusively as an excuse for unbelief and spiritual weakness.

It is an interpretive principle that is also used as a corrective principle, that is, to point out that what belongs to one period should not be carried over to another. However, the corrective is usually applied in only one direction, although many more errors are committed in the other direction. The principle is almost always used to claim that future blessings have been illegitimately assigned to the present, when that is often not the case at all — those blessings indeed belong to the present. The error is committed far more often in the opposite direction, so that present blessings are relegated to the future.

The principle itself does not settle any specific issue. Which blessing is intended for the present or reserved for the future? We must let the Bible tell us. We cannot state the principle and then assign things to the present or to the future any way we wish. We cannot assert that something belongs to the present simply because we want it now, and we cannot assert that something belongs to the future simply because we want to excuse ourselves for not having it. But the latter has been done throughout church history — that is, the things that the Bible explicitly declares for the present have been assigned to the future instead. In fact, almost all the blessings that the Bible declares for the present have been assigned to the future — to various degrees.

An example is taken from the promise of resurrection, or a resurrection body. Jesus Christ has secured for us the resurrection, himself raised from the dead as the first fruit. Our resurrection is guaranteed. The blessing belongs to us now, but we will receive it in the future. However, this illustration is then applied to attack blessings that the Bible declares for the present, such as healing for the body. This is religious fraud. Resurrection is not healing, but transformation. Our body will not be healed, but changed. The Bible promises healing, but if any healing is going to happen, it must happen now. If it does not happen now, then there is in fact no fulfillment for the promise.

Therefore, the corrective principle must be applied against those who suppose that complete healing is reserved for the future. This far more common error stands as a far greater threat to the spiritual, doctrinal, and physical health of God's people than the rare error — at least I have never directly encountered it in my whole life, have any of you? — that a person supposes that the resurrection body is to be received now. In fact, even if a person believes that he should have the resurrection body now, what would happen is that he does not receive it, along with some spiritual confusion that could be repaired. But if a

person believes that healing is reserved for the future, when he suffers from sickness now, this person could die from the condition, when he does not have to die or continue to suffer. If total healing is not received, it is better to blame ourselves than to change the gospel. Religious charlatans complain that others preach a seeker-friendly gospel, but the truth is that they themselves change the gospel, only to make it seeker-friendly to a different crowd.

In any case, whatever the effect, the Bible says that resurrection is for the future, but healing is for the present. We must not excuse the almost universal religious tendency to relegate present possession into future experience as the accidental error of a humble mind. This is because a blessing from God is also a responsibility for man. If the Bible says something belongs to you now, not only do you have the option to receive it, but you have the duty to receive it, and you also have the duty to teach it to others and help them receive it. Thus to suppose that this blessing belongs to the future guarantees your rebellion against the gospel. You cannot respectfully decline the blessings of God, because Jesus purchased them with his own blood. His blood is worth more, so much more, than your religious dignity and tradition.

Before we warn one person against expecting things that are reserved for the future, let us warn ten million people against rejecting things that are intended for the present. They turn a seemingly innocent interpretative principle for making proper distinctions into a corrective principle for attacking gospel blessings. We can exploit this and reverse their error. We can use it as a corrective principle to promote faith, reminding people the distinction between the present and the future, and then compelling them to acknowledge that so many blessings are explicitly stated as for the present in the Bible. If we must remind them about the "already / not yet" distinction, then we will teach them that Jesus Christ has already come, that he has already become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God now, that he has already carried our sicknesses, so that we might become healed and whole now, that he has already poured out the Holy Spirit, so that we might become the ambassadors of Christ with miraculous powers now.

Jesus said, "The Father knows that you need all these things." His doctrine is to affirm these things as legitimate desires, and then affirm the fatherhood of God as the basis for us to expect these things from him. But the "already / not yet" scam convinces people that the Father might withhold these things from them. Thus the doctrine blasphemes the very fatherhood of God, and it robs people of legitimate needs and desires in this world. So some fail to receive their healing, their provision, and other things from God, things that God has promised to them. And then some harden their hearts toward God, thinking that God is cruel, and that he is their enemy. Those who teach the "already / not yet" scam incur the people's blood on their hands. This Judge who slaughtered those who said of the golden calf — "This is the god who brought you out of Egypt" — will he spare those who say of their own theological invention, "This is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who brought you out of the kingdom of darkness"?

When Jesus went to raise Lazarus from the dead, Martha said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." So the theologians tell us, "These things had happened in the past." Jesus answered, "Your brother will rise again." But Martha said, "I

know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." So the theologians tell us, "These things will happen in the future." Jesus answered, "I am the resurrection and the life." The sisters applied the "already / not yet" principle on Jesus, but rather than displaying their theological education, it revealed their unbelief and ignorance. They did not even know Jesus very well. For Jesus, it is always a good time for a miracle. In the theology of Jesus, it is not a matter of time, but a matter of faith. He said to Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" And Lazarus was raised from the dead.

Faith is the issue. You do not have the things that the Bible promises not because they are reserved for the "not yet" — they have already arrived, but you have not yet believed! It is always a good time for a miracle. It is always a good time for God to save, to heal, and to bless. It is always a good time for God to be a Father, and for Jesus Christ to be glorified. As the apostle said, the righteousness that is of faith does not say, "Who will ascend into heaven?" as if to bring Christ down from heaven, and it does not say, "Who will descend into the abyss?" as if to bring Christ back from the dead. Jesus Christ had already come down from heaven, and he had already returned from the dead. But faith says, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." It is still a good time for a miracle. The theologians who are so smug with their "already / not yet" corrective have not attained beyond the theology of Martha. And they are the doctors who teach you!

The theologians assume an appearance of scholarly precision, but it is in reality a cloak of deception, eroding people's confidence in the word of God, and robbing them of the resources that they need for this life, both to live and to serve. Thus they are forced to turn to politics, science, worldly education, and the like to meet the needs that are well supplied in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If triumphalism is the claim to victory that belongs to the "not yet," then defeatism is the delay of victory that belongs to the "already." The theologians warn about triumphalism, but actual triumphalism is rare. It is so rare compared to defeatism that it is practically a negligible issue. Defeatism is more common by a million times a million times a million. It is so common that it is a way of life for those who claim to be Christians. But it is a rejection of the gospel. We must, therefore, seize the "already / not yet" distinction to emphasize that many of the blessings that theologians assign to the future are in fact available to us right now.

The teachers of no-faith are already convicted, but not yet punished, so that while there is time, they ought to repent. They must lay down their religious dignity and pride, and admit that they have been false and inferior in faith, then begin to walk with Christ. By their doctrine, they show that they know the distinction between the present and the future, and that God intends some things for the present and some things for the future. However, rather than submitting to God's arrangement as to what things belong to the present and what things belong to the future, they make their own arrangement according to their lack of faith, their religious heritage and tradition, and the people's feelings and experiences. Then they attack those who preach the truth. By their awareness and deliberation, they testify against themselves. They have lost every excuse, and they are self-condemned.

3. Out of Egypt, Dead in Sin

Now a man is saved not by hearing the gospel, but by believing the gospel. As it is written, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." There it refers to those whom God rescued from slavery with a mighty hand, and with signs and wonders: "For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?" God took the people out of Egypt — they were already out, they were already free! They were a church unto themselves, but afterward he rejected them and left them to die in the wilderness.

Likewise, the apostle wrote, "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." They were gathered. They were baptized. They ate the same spiritual food. They even drank the same spiritual drink from the rock that was Christ. Yet they were not all saved: "Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert."

Do you think that you are safe, because you have joined a church? Then you study high and low, argue left and right, to obtain a proper baptism. Do you think that you would be saved, if you eat and drink of Christ? The people who followed Moses were also baptized, and they ate and drank of Christ, but God rejected them and scattered their corpses. Why? The Scripture says, "So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief." You are saved, if you have faith. But how can you say that you have faith, if you harden your heart and refuse to hear his voice in the gospel promises of righteousness, healing, miracles, visions and dreams, and power from the Holy Spirit? There is no other gospel.

If those who opposed Moses perished without mercy, what will happen to those who reject Jesus Christ, who commanded us to perform the same and the greater works, and to receive power from on high, so that we may see visions, dream dreams, prophesy, heal the sick, and perform all kinds of signs and wonders? This message was first declared by the Lord himself, and it was confirmed by the apostles. "God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles." On Pentecost, God granted miraculous powers to a hundred and twenty people, ninety percent of which were not apostles. Then Scripture records that God continued to bear witness to the message by signs and wonders, and again, the greatest of these were often done by disciples who were not apostles.

So God confirmed to us that Jesus meant what he said, that he would grant power to the disciples by faith in God and by the Holy Spirit, and that they would perform the same works and the greater works. By signs and wonders, God demonstrated to us that he has made signs and wonders possible for us. But still you would not believe, and then you claim that you have a part in the defense and confirmation of the gospel? Man, you deceive yourself. You are saved only by faith, and only by faith in the gospel, and the only gospel

is one that comes with miraculous powers by the name of Jesus and by the Holy Spirit, for all generations, and "for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Thus it is not in the hearing of the gospel that a man is saved, but in the believing of the gospel that a man is saved. The gospel is what it is. If you do not believe it, then you do not believe it, and you are not saved. "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith."

Standing out in the desert is no proof that you have been accepted — even though you have escaped Egypt, and even though you have been gathered and baptized, and eating and drinking of Christ. Those who have faith in God will also enter into his promises by faith. Without faith, God will leave you to die in your sins. As the Scripture says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Without faith, the feast of God would be right before you in the promises of the gospel, but you would be unable to receive any of them, because you would be that enemy.

Once more then: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." God is calling you again. Here is one more chance: Repent.

4. Cessationism: A Systematic Apostasy

We could write an entire book on how the damnable heresy of cessationism perverts every doctrine of the Christian faith. It would occupy another volume to detail the incalculable damage that this demonic teaching has inflicted upon the church throughout history, and indeed on all of humanity.

Here we will do nothing more than briefly consider how it relates to an outline of Christian dogmatics. Since I have established the items below in various places, I will only list them and assume that they are understood. Let us not be spiritual infants, but be quick to recall and apply what we have learned.

Some of these errors are committed not only by cessationists, but by more general categories of those who claim to be Christians, whom we call people of no-faith or unbeliefism. Although we refer only to the cessationists for the sake of convenience, all no-faith people are guilty of many of the items below.

Bibliology

When it comes to the inspiration of Scripture, the evangelical formulation places too much emphasis on the apostles, and the cessationist exploits this to make his case. I have explained how the formulation is defective and forces the evangelical himself into a corner as it requires him to invent one theory after another to address the problems generated. God is the author of Scripture, and this does not help cessationism, because God still lives.

Then it is said that cessationism follows from the sufficiency of Scripture, but Paul told Timothy that the Scripture he had — the Old Testament — was already sufficient. Thus the complete Bible is not only sufficient, but more than sufficient — this uncovers another flaw in the evangelical formulation. In any case, since the Old Testament was already sufficient, if cessationism follows from the sufficiency of Scripture, then cessationism must declare that the entire New Testament is unnecessary and fraudulent. The Bible is sufficient to build faith for miracles. And it is sufficient to condemn the cessationist.

And then it is said that cessationism follows from the finality of Scripture, or the completion of Scripture. However, the gifts of the Spirit did not write Scripture, but God wrote it — Scripture came from his very breath — and he still lives. If the completion of Scripture caused the ability to write Scripture to cease, then it must mean that the completion of Scripture destroyed God himself, since he is the sole ability to write Scripture. Therefore, the cessationist cannot even be a theist, let alone a Christian. The Bible is the final word on the subject, that God promises supernatural blessings and mandates the ministry of miracles.

The cessationist also subverts the clarity of Scripture, since he forbids straightforward faith in the words of the Bible. Rather, he imposes an artificial framework on Scripture, along with various fancy words and strange theories about the purposes of God, in order to twist

the words of God beyond all recognition, so that he may justify his unbelief and lack of power.

The cessationist claims to defend the doctrine that Scripture is sufficient and final, but he rejects what this sufficient and final Scripture says. As Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" Beware! This same Scripture is also sufficient to declare the final damnation of those who persist in unbelief. This has been made clear in the letter to the Hebrews, among other places. What good is it to declare the sufficiency of Scripture, if you do not believe it? What profit is there to declare the finality of the Bible, if you do not obey it? Why do you declare the clarity of Scripture, if you distort what it says? The only effect is self-damnation.

Theology

The nature of God is to work miracles. This is evident throughout the Bible. As it is written, "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" It would be ridiculous to affirm that God is still majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, but that he is no longer working wonders. It has nothing to do with the history of redemption or the completion of Scripture — it is his nature to work miracles. The issue is not when it is, but what he is.

God performs miracles often not to prove himself or to reveal himself, or to authenticate new revelations, but to fulfill his old promises and ancient revelations. He performs miracles because he is true to his word. In fact, most miracles are performed on this basis. The cessationist distorts both the nature of Scripture and the nature of God.

God is sovereign. He sovereignly makes promises, and then he always sovereignly keeps his promises. However, to the cessationist, even when God has promised something, he might not do it, because "God is sovereign." This is what they tell Christians who pray according to the words of Scripture. "God is sovereign," so regardless of what the Bible says, each prayer is still decided on a case-by-case basis. In other words, every promise in the Bible becomes entirely meaningless. Thus the cessationist makes God into a sovereign liar, a sovereign covenant-breaker. This is blasphemy. It is one of the many excommunicable offenses committed by every cessationist.

The Bible tells us not to forget his benefits, and declares that God is one who forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases. If we have faith for him to forgive us, then of course he forgives us. Although forgiveness and healing are provided on the same basis, the cessationist would say that even when we have faith for God to heal us, he still might not heal us. Thus the cessationist introduces a contradiction within the biblical account of the nature of God and the nature of redemption, and he has no basis to claim that God will always forgive someone who has faith, so that his own basis for salvation is destroyed.

Jesus declared that those who believe in him would perform the same works that he did and even greater works than he did. He explained that God would be the one who performs

these works, so that he may be glorified. The cessationist does not allow this, and therefore insists on a fundamentally different version of God how operates.

Christology

The Bible says that Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. Anyone who has faith should be delivered from sickness, just as anyone who has faith should be delivered from sin. If we experience any difficulty, we ought to examine ourselves and not change the doctrine. The two blessings are secured and provided on the same basis, so that to affirm one requires a person to affirm the other, and to deny one requires a person to deny the other as well. The cessationist thus rejects the atonement, and overturns his own claim to salvation.

The Bible says that the disciples healed the sick and cast out demons in the name of Jesus. The gospel doctrine is that God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at the right hand of the Most High, so that every being in heaven, on earth, and under the earth must bow to that name. In fact, that name was effective in performing miracles even before the resurrection of Christ. Thus the cessationist rejects the authority of the name of Jesus, and regards it as below what it was even before the resurrection of Christ.

Peter said that the crippled man was healed "by faith in the name of Jesus," but then he also said that "there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." The apostle preached the same name for salvation in the same way and in the same context that he preached it and wielded it for a miracle of healing. If the name of Jesus can save today, then the name of Jesus can heal today. If the name of Jesus does not heal today, then on what basis can we believe that it saves today? It is the same name. Thus the cessationist rejects the only name by which he must be saved. There is no other way, but he rejects the only way.

When Jesus declared that those who believe in him would perform the same works that he did and even greater works than he did, he also said that he would be the one who performs them. He said, "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these... You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." Since the cessationist denies the ministry of miracles, he also overthrows an entire aspect of the post-resurrection and present-day ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that Jesus is the one who performs the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that this baptism endows his disciples with "power from on high," the same power that Jesus had when he walked the earth and performed miracles. Since the cessationist denies that Jesus now grants miracle-working power to those disciples who receive by faith, he rejects the ministry of Jesus as the baptizer.

Thus the cessationist makes a thorough assault on the doctrine of Christ, from his pre-resurrection authority, to his post-resurrection authority, and from his work of atonement, to his work of mediator, miracle-worker, and baptizer. This last item, of course, also becomes an attack on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Pneumatology

Cessationism rejects the Bible's teaching that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is distinguishable from the Spirit's work in regeneration. And cessationism rejects the Bible's teaching on what this baptism in the Holy Spirit is supposed to produce. In the Bible, when the Holy Spirit comes upon a person, it results in miracles and prophecies. The Bible repeatedly and explicitly states that this is what the baptism in the Holy Spirit intends to produce. The cessationist rejects this, but reduces the operation of the Spirit in the believer into a mere moral power, perhaps resulting in holiness, endurance, and such things.

Peter preached this baptism of miracle power as the gospel, sounding as if to receive forgiveness of sin is itself a means to an end — to receive the Holy Spirit for power. He said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." He did not say, "Believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of eternal life." But he said, "Believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

What did he mean by the gift of the Holy Spirit? He specified that he referred to what Joel said: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." In other words, Peter said, "Believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive prophecies, visions, dreams, and so on." Thus the cessationist overthrows not only a major aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit, but he overthrows the apostolic gospel itself.

The cessationist rejects the gifts of the Spirit. However, the Bible promises and mandates the increase and expansion of miraculous powers, including the gifts of the Spirit (the gifts represent only one among several ways to perform or receive miracles). Therefore, the cessationist further rejects the work of the Spirit, and also what it means to be a Christian. Often, the Spirit has been practically reduced to a moral influence, but he is much more than that. The cessationist suppresses the Spirit in wickedness, and reaps within his own spirit and body and society the results of his unbelief.

Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and then you will be my witnesses." Since the cessationist rejects this power, he not only defies biblical pneumatology, but also biblical missiology. The cessationist makes it his official doctrine and creed, often even a test of orthodoxy, to reject the Great Commission as Jesus designed it.

The cessationist also rejects what Jesus meant by the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Some cessationists have indeed committed this unpardonable sin, and since they have altered and relaxed its meaning, they also increase the probability that other people would

commit the sin. Thus they are accountable not only for their own unpardonable blasphemy, but also for other people's blasphemy and damnation.

Anthropology, Harmartiology, Soteriology

The nature of man as a spirit, and made in the image of God, especially one that has been reborn, carries certain implications for spiritual and miraculous operations. The cessationist does not know or does not accept what the Bible teaches about the spiritual nature of man. Then James, in the context of faith and prayer, wrote that Elijah was a man like us, and by faith and prayer he performed miracles that controlled nature. The Bible does not say that I need to be like a prophet to work miracles, because it says that a prophet who worked miracles was like me. The cessationist does not know what it means to be a human being, or what it means when a human being has faith.

Jesus is the vine, I am the branch, and without him I can do nothing. But I am not without him. I am connected to him, and draw life and power from him. I am not Jesus, but the fact that I am not Jesus guarantees that I can do the same works that he did and even greater works than he did, because he said that "anyone who has faith" in him could do these things — not him, but anyone who has faith in him. And of course, then he would be the one who does these things through the one who has faith. I do not need to be a God, or an apostle, or a prophet, to work miracles. I only need to be human — a man who has faith in Jesus Christ.

When it comes to the doctrine of sin, the cessationist often speaks of repentance, sin, and unworthiness, but he refuses to repent of his own unbelief. He does not warn people about unbelief toward the miraculous, the gifts of the Spirit, and the benefits of the gospel; rather, he promotes unbelief toward these things. Thus the cessationist shows that he has an awareness of sin, but he does not allow the Bible to define sin. He embraces the chief sin of unbelief for himself, and he promotes the sin of unbelief to others. He still has not learned the first lesson about sin, but he echoes the serpent, the devil, who said, "Did God really say?"

As for soteriology, we have already covered some items that could also come under this doctrine. The cessationist rejects the atonement as it is taught in the Bible, that this work of Christ provides both forgiveness and healing, among other things, and that they are available in the present by faith. He denies that Jesus Christ saves the whole man. Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is also given on the basis of redemption. In the application of redemption, the cessationist rejects the Bible's teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, confusing it and merging it with other items by force, so that he may suppress its true purpose and power entirely.

Ecclesiology

Paul wrote that just as the body is one and has many members, so it is with Christ. Then in the context of spiritual gifts, he said that one part of the body cannot say to another, "I have

no need of you!" Are the miraculous gifts strong and needed? Then we would expect them to stand. But what if the miraculous gifts seem weak and unnecessary? The apostle replied, "On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." Any way we look at it, if healing is a gift of the Spirit, no one can say to this gift or one who uses it, "I have no need of you!" Likewise, if prophecy is a gift of the Spirit, if tongues is a gift of the Spirit, if miracles is a gift of the Spirit, no one can say, "I have no need of you!" However, except for the short period after the resurrection of Christ, the cessationist says of the gifts of the Spirit and those with the ministries of these gifts — for the past, present, and future — "I have no need of you!" He slaps the Spirit across the centuries. Thus the cessationist commits the Corinthian error — in historic proportions.

The apostle said, "earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues," but the cessationist forbids to prophesy, and earnestly detests speaking in tongues. The apostle said that the believers may all speak up in prophecy one by one, but the cessationist says that the believers may never speak up in prophecy. The apostle said, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies." The cessationist does the opposite. The apostle said, "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation." But the cessationist declares that no one can have a revelation, no one can have a tongue, and no one can have an interpretation. Is this even a Christian church? The cessationist church never attains to the apostolic mandate of what a church service ought to be and do. It claims to be a church but does not behave like a church.

The cessationist church does not maintain church order. Proper church order does not mean only stopping the wrong things, but also promoting the right things. We do not suppress false doctrine by removing all preaching from the church. This would not be church order, but apostasy. It would not be protecting the church, but destroying the church. Likewise, church order regulates the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. If it forbids the gifts of the Spirit, it is no longer church order, but apostasy.

What about church discipline? In the Bible, the church could gather to hand a sinning member over to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh," but you need spiritual power to do that. Nowadays, the excommunicated member is likely to become happier and healthier because he no longer has to listen to those depressing sermons about sickness! There is more healing in the world than in the church.

What about ordination? As the Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul." But now we have only human ambition, human education, and then a human committee. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you." What, the gift? What, by prophecy? But now we have diplomas and certificates. Is any cessationist truly ordained? Perhaps he may be "lawfully" ordained, as the creed says — that is, according to human religious law — but he is not spiritually and powerfully ordained.

Eschatology

The Bible says that the gifts of the Spirit are like a taste of "the powers of the age to come." Therefore, to say that we have moved beyond the gifts of the Spirit can only mean that we are living in the "age to come." This is not only false eschatology, but it must also mean that we — including the cessationists, if they are believers — should have powers even stronger than that demonstrated by the gifts of the Spirit. If the gifts of the Spirit are only a taste, and we are now beyond this stage, then we should have the full measure of supernatural powers. We ought to experience a billion times billion times billion the powers demonstrated by the apostles. If we are not in the "age to come," then we are still living in the time when we can taste "the powers of the age to come," so that we ought to have the gifts of the Spirit.

In another place, the Bible says that the gifts of the Spirit will cease when the powers that they represent become so magnified and commonplace in our experience that the gifts would be as the things of children. If I see "in a mirror dimly" with the gifts of the Spirit now, I will then see "face to face." If I know in part now, then "I shall know fully, even as I have been known." If I can do something as a miracle now by the gifts of the Spirit, then when the gifts of the Spirit cease, I will do this thing and much more as a native and natural ability, and it would no longer be a miracle to me. I would not need the workings of miracles to walk on water if it has become my inherent ability to walk on water.

If the gifts of the Spirit have ceased, then we are already at that stage. But since we are not at that stage, it is false eschatology to say that the gifts of the Spirit have ceased. The cessationist often accuses people of teaching triumphalism. This is usually a false claim, and the cessationist doctrine is worse. From the perspective of biblical eschatology, cessationism is triumphalism without the triumph. It is the doctrine of an ultimate loser.

Conclusion

There are more doctrines and categories to consider, but I already had to rush through the previous ones and had given up on items that I could have discussed, even combining man, sin, and salvation into one section. What more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of how cessationism corrupts apologetics, counseling, ethics, politics, economics, education, work and life, and every aspect of Christian thought and conduct.

For apologetics, the cessationist rejects the Spirit's role in devising arguments, recalling principles, uncovering secrets, and performing miracles. As I said in our program on Christian Argumentation, "The Holy Spirit is the master theologian, philosopher, cross-examiner, prophetic-partner, miracle-worker...The missing factor in every course of Christian apologetics."

For counseling, the cessationist denies the Spirit's help in revealing hearts and producing answers, and healing psychological conditions that are associated with physical ailments, such as some cases of depression. What about casting out demons? Are you joking? That

is for the movies. The cessationist sends the devil to the unbelievers, so that they can put him in a straightjacket and pump him full of drugs.

For ethics, the cessationist hinders the Spirit from changing the homosexuals and drug addicts by miraculous powers. Some cases of abortion — or some excuses for abortion — can be eliminated outright by miracles of healing for the unborn, or even just by returning the mere doctrine of healing into the discussion. Calling to mind that we are not only targeting cessationism, but all unbeliefism, something like the ethics of theft and poverty must be addressed not only with bare principles and commandments, but also with the promise of material provision in the gospel.

As for how cessationism has corrupted the church's engagement with culture, the people used to be scared of Jesus because of the miracles done in his name: "None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem" and "They were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor." Now they laugh at him. The church is indignant, and fires back with politics.

Cessationism has redefined how the church relates to the world, even how God relates to the world. Look! The Lord said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." What kind of ambassador bargains with a conquered nation on its terms? Would he not be a traitor to the king? Would he not be someone the people would spit on, beat up, and kick around? But the cessationist has betrayed King Jesus and his edict, the gospel.

Cessationism corrupts the entire Christian system of truth, and the entire Christian way of life. It attacks everything about the Christian faith, leaving nothing untouched. It is a complete apostasy from the Christian faith. It is a comprehensive defection from the gospel of Jesus Christ. The result is a different religion from what the Scripture teaches.

5. The Straw Man is You

Christian: Cessationism is a false doctrine.

Cessationist: You are attacking a straw man.

Christian: And here is the necessary implication of your doctrine.

Cessationist: You are also attacking a straw man.

Christian: What about what you did the other day then? You shot that man to death, therefore you killed him.

Cessationist: You are attacking a straw man again. I shot that man to death, but I did not kill him.

Christian: When a straw man is an exact clone of you, that straw man is you.

Christian: Jesus told us to heal the sick and cast out demons. He said that those who believe in him will perform the same works that he did.

Cessationist: I will believe it when I see you do it.

Christian: You will believe Jesus only if you see me obey him?

Cessationist: Well...apparently that is what I said. But...no, that is a straw man.

Christian: Jesus said this thing, and I say this same thing.

Cessationist: Yes.

Christian: But you will believe this thing, only when you see me do this thing.

Cessationist: Yes.

Christian: Therefore, you will believe this thing that Jesus said, only when you see me do this thing that Jesus said.

Cessationist: No, that is a straw man.

Christian: When a straw man is an exact clone of you, that straw man is you.

Christian: I think you should believe Jesus even if no one else does. But if you will believe Jesus only if you see me do what Jesus said, then come to my service tonight and watch me pray for the sick.

Cessationist: No, because what Jesus said does not happen, so why should I waste my time? Since you believe what Jesus said, you are a false teacher, so why should I go to your gathering?

Christian: So you will believe it when you see it, but you refuse to look.

Cessationist: Right.

Christian: What about what I asked you this morning? When will you stop shooting people and killing them? The Bible says, "You shall not murder."

Cessationist: First, I already told you, this is a straw man. I shoot people to death, but I do not kill them. Second, I will obey that commandment when I see you obey it.

Christian: You will obey "You shall not murder" only if you see me not murder?

Cessationist: Yes.

Christian: Then come follow me, and watch me love people instead of kill them.

Cessationist: No!

Christian: Why?

Cessationist: Because of your false doctrine!

Christian: So you will continue to murder? You will continue in your sin and disobedience, and use me as an excuse, even though I give you no excuse?

Cessationist: That is a straw man. I shoot people to death and disobey "You shall not murder," but I do not murder and I do not disobey.

Christian: When a straw man is an exact clone of you, that straw man is you.

6. Sola Slogans

Pastor: Scripture alone!

Christian: Amen! The Bible is sufficient and final, and the only source of our doctrine. It promises healing, abundance, and miracles, and it promises visions, dreams, and prophecies by the Holy Spirit. This is God's sufficient and final word on the matter. I will not let anyone talk me out of it! God will not change what he said, and no mere man has the authority to overturn it.

Pastor: No...but faith alone!

Christian: Banzai! By faith, we receive salvation, healing, abundance, the Holy Spirit, along with visions, dreams, and prophecies. Paul wrote that God gave people the Holy Spirit and worked miracles among them because they believed what they heard. Jesus said that anyone who believes can perform the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles, such as performing a miracle on a tree like he did, or even a greater miracle like moving a mountain.

Pastor: No...but grace alone!

Christian: Cowabunga! The Bible associates great grace with great power (Acts 4:33, 1 Corinthians 1:4-7), even the power to work signs and wonders. And it says that we may boldly approach the throne of grace to obtain grace to help whenever we need. I believe in this kind of grace.

Pastor: No...but, Christ alone!

Christian: Hosanna! The Bible says that Jesus took my infirmities and carried my sicknesses. This Jesus promised me that I will perform the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles, because whatever I ask in his name, he will do it (John 14:14). This Jesus is the one who performs the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the only baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Bible is one that brings visions, dreams, tongues and prophecies, miraculous powers, and all kinds of signs and wonders. There is no other baptism, and there is no other Jesus.

Pastor: No...but glory to God alone!

Christian: Hallelujah! What a wonderful sermon. Now we are putting everything together. The Bible often talks about how miracles of healing and so on bring glory to God. In the context of talking about his own miracles, Jesus said that we can ask anything from the

Father in the name of Jesus, and he would give it to us, that he may be glorified. Healing miracles and answered prayers bring glory to God alone. So the SCRIPTURE promises that when we have FAITH to approach the throne of GRACE in the name of Jesus CHRIST, we can receive miracles for ourselves and others, to the end that GOD alone may be glorified.

Pastor: Well...no. I do not think this was the intended meaning of the Solas.

Christian: There is only one Scripture, one faith, one grace, one Christ, and one God, and they all demand this conclusion — that is what the Scripture teaches, what faith produces, what grace does, what Christ promises, and what God glories in. Either the Solas refer to the same Scripture, the same faith, the same grace, the same Christ, and the same God, or they do not. The Solas must include this conclusion. If the Solas exclude this conclusion, then they become a separate religion that excludes the Christian faith, so that the Christian faith also excludes the Solas as intended when they were said. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say "Scripture alone" but reject much of what Scripture says, and you cannot say "faith alone" but reject much of what is promised to this faith. You cannot say "grace alone" for salvation but reject much of what this grace does. You cannot say "Christ alone" for salvation but reject much of what this Christ commanded. You cannot say "God's glory alone" but reject much of what brings glory to this God. To assert the Solas and exclude the above conclusion would make you the biggest religious hypocrite in the world.

Pastor: What do you want from me then?

Christian: I think you need to be honest with yourself and make a change.

A week later...

Pastor: Brothers and sisters, in the spirit of reformed and always reforming, today I present to you the updated Solas of our tradition. It is more honest and friendly to what we have believed all along.

Pastor: Tradition alone!

Church: Amen!

Pastor: Creed alone!

Church: Amen!

Pastor: Ritual alone!

Church: Amen!

Pastor: Unbelief alone!

Church: Amen!

Pastor: Glory to man alone!

Church: Amen!

Satan: Amen.

7. Cessationism: Worse than Sorcery

What do you think about the people in Acts 2:13? Why didn't they commit the unpardonable sin? And Simon the magician insulted the Spirit (Acts 8:19). Nevertheless, Peter commanded him to repent. As for the cessationists, they do not seem to be joking when they say certain things about the Spirit, so how can I know when a cessationist has committed the eternal sin?

How do you know they did not commit the unpardonable sin in Acts 2:13? Perhaps they did, and they were damned forever. The text does not say that all of the people mocked the disciples, but only some of them. It says the people were amazed and wondered, "What does this mean?" (v. 12). And then others mocked and said that the disciples were drunk (v. 13). There were many thousands of people there, and about three thousand of these people were saved (v. 41). It is possible that the mockers were not among the three thousand. However, if their insults and attitudes did not amount to blasphemy against the Spirit, then they were not forever damned, and perhaps some of them were among the three thousand. Both possibilities are consistent with a straightforward acceptance of what Jesus said about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Now if a limited group of people who questioned a particular manifestation of the Spirit incites us to discuss if they had committed the unpardonable sin, what must we say about a whole tradition or creed that makes the sweeping claim that all of this has ended? Cessationism is worse than what the people said in Acts 2:13.

How did Simon insult the Spirit in Acts 8:19? It is not obvious why you would think he did, so it is not easy to respond directly. Nevertheless, while we are on this passage, we should correct a common distortion. Philip had preached Jesus Christ to the people, and those who believed were saved. Then Peter came to the people to impart the Holy Spirit to them, so that they would receive power as Jesus promised. Simon did not ask to buy the Holy Spirit. He offered money to Peter, not to influence the Spirit, but to influence Peter to confer the ability or the ministry of the laying on of hands to impart the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He said, "Give me this power." What power? He did not say, "That I may receive the Holy Spirit," but he said, "That anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 19). To use healing as an illustration, Simon would not be offering to buy a miracle of healing to heal himself, but to buy a ministry of healing to heal others. The "gift of God" (v. 20) that Peter said he could not buy was not the Holy Spirit, but the ministry to impart the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Certainly Simon was wrong. But in his perverted way, he admired the Holy Spirit and the ministry of imparting the Spirit. In fact, he was much closer to a proper attitude than the cessationists.

Peter told him to repent, but you must read the text you use. Peter told him to repent so that "if possible" or "perhaps" he might be forgiven (v. 22). When you speak carelessly about the Holy Spirit, you are treading on dangerous grounds. Of course there would be no room for repentance if a statement amounts to blasphemy against the Spirit. Even when it is unclear to us, it is always clear to God. However, when it is uncertain to us that a statement

amounts to blasphemy against the Spirit, even an apostle could only say it might be "possible" for the person to be forgiven. Simon did not call the manifestations the work of demons. He did not say Philip or Peter preached false doctrine. He did not say the manifestation was "strange fire." He did not say that what Jesus promised about the Spirit had ceased. He did not make accusations of counterfeit or fanaticism. Cessationists have said all these things and more, but Simon did not say these things. He did not utter any criticism at all about what was happening. He acknowledged the reality of God's power and wanted to participate. He had only praise and desire for it, but his perverted attitude was enough to earn a rebuke, with enough room for only a "possible" forgiveness. Consider what this means for the cessationists.

Simon was arguably in a better place both theologically and spiritually than the cessationists. He grasped the distinction between receiving the Christ (Acts 8:12-13) and receiving the Spirit (Acts 8:14-16). He also grasped the distinction between receiving the Spirit (Acts 8:17) and imparting the Spirit (Acts 8:18). Theologically, this makes him superior to almost every Christian tradition and scholar in the past two thousand years. The fact that he understood both of these distinctions establishes him as not only incrementally superior, but paradigmatically superior, to almost every single Christian tradition and scholar in all of church history. Nevertheless, this was the basic gospel that the early converts everywhere learned on the first day (Acts 2:38, 19:2, 5-6). He was also spiritually and ethically superior. Although his attitude and motive were surely defective to the point of sin, at least he was — wickedly, selfishly — stumbling toward the direction of endorsement and participation of the work of God, rather than making it a matter of creed and policy to resist the Spirit!

What? Do you say that whereas Simon was probably unsaved, at least the cessationists believe in Jesus? The Bible says that Simon also believed and was baptized, and even continued with Philip (Acts 8:13). Do you think that Philip was stupid? If Simon was a false convert, this does not make the cessationists look any better. If Simon was a false convert, and he possibly was, what is there to prevent the immediate worldwide excommunication of every cessationist without trial? If Simon was a false convert, what about the cessationists? Their criticisms are explicit, deliberate, self-aware, and full of unbelief and malice. They leave no excuse for themselves. How do you know when a cessationist has committed the unpardonable sin? There are cases when it is obvious. There are indeed cessationists who have blasphemed the Holy Spirit as clearly as the Pharisees did, sometimes even more explicitly than the Pharisees did. There is no repentance and no forgiveness for them. They are damned. They will burn in hell forever. But when it is less clear, we do what Peter did. We rebuke them harshly and command them to repent, so that "if possible" God might forgive them.

There is nothing in these texts that contradicts our straightforward acceptance of what Jesus said about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. If you speak against the Spirit, you are finished. It does not matter how much you appear to have contributed to the advance of the gospel in the world. It does not matter if you have been faithful to this or that historic creed — a creed that probably also blasphemes the Spirit. It does not matter that you are famous as a defender of the faith. It does not matter if you have preached thousands of sermons

and written volumes of biblical commentaries. It does not matter if people regard you as one of the most significant preachers in church history. If you have committed this sin, you will burn and burn and burn in hell. This is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Some people might criticize me when they attempt to hide the fact that they refuse to agree with Christ, but I have no authority to recant the doctrine. I am just as powerless as they are when it comes to arriving at a different conclusion. It cannot be done. Jesus said what he said. Attacking me does not refute him. But if I say what he said, then to attack me is to attack him.

The texts that you mentioned do not weaken the doctrine of Jesus on the topic, but they emphasize the spiritual depravity of the cessationists. They show that a cessationist's understanding and appreciation of God's power is worse than a sorcerer who was possibly a false convert, and possibly unsaved. Jesus said that his religious critics did not know the Scriptures or the power of God. We face the same situation today. The modern religious critics of Jesus — the cessationists who call themselves Christians, and those who espouse other forms of unbelief, such as those who reject the physical healing and material blessing promised by Christ — do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. From the intellectual perspective, in the face of what the Bible teaches, to maintain the doctrine of cessationism implies a level of reading comprehension below many mentally disabled individuals. From the spiritual or ethical perspective, the cessationists are worse than sorcerers and occultists, because they refuse to extend the respect and acknowledgment that even satanists offer to the power of God.

Again, they answer that at least they believe in Jesus Christ. But the Bible explicitly declares that Simon also believed, and received enough recognition for this that he was baptized in water. Then he followed Philip, who most likely could have detected a fraud better than we can. So if Simon was a false convert, then the cessationists can also be false converts. But then Simon had more knowledge and appreciation of God's Spirit than the cessationists. Rather than accepting and obeying the word of God, they make up their own doctrines and make traditions out of them, setting them in stone in their historic creeds, and hiding behind their idol theologians, who were also wrong. After that they speak from their traditions and creeds as their actual starting point, casting aside the gospel of Christ and the word of God. The religious experts did the same thing in the time of Christ, and finally murdered him so that they could continue their way.

We are not afraid of them. As Joshua said concerning the heathens, "Their defenses have departed from them. The Lord is with us. Fear them not." The Spirit of God has long departed from them, and they do not know it, and refuse to admit it. They are helpless. They cannot do anything to us. They cannot stop us. But even if they manage to kill us, our teachings from the word of God move forward — automatically, it seems — propelled by the Spirit of God, entirely devastating centuries of false doctrines and traditions. Still, God is merciful. Just as God is able to miraculously heal mental diseases by faith in the name of Jesus, he can perform an even greater miracle and restore sanity and intelligence to the cessationists, so that they may at last approach the starting line of faith, no longer as false leaders who deceive, but as unlearned spiritual children and weaklings who will begin to know the true gospel and power of Jesus Christ.

8. "As you study more deeply..."

As you study more deeply the things of God, leaving a spirit of anti-intellectualism, strive to avoid the much greater evil of unbelief. Many people who embark on an intellectual pursuit eventually become hardened against the Scripture itself, refusing its promises of freedom, power, and miracles. An enlightened and vigorous Christian mind is supposed to help you increase in faith and fortify you against error. If Satan cannot trick you to live like an idiot, he would want you to turn your mind against God and his blessings instead of against evil, defeat, sickness, and poverty. He would want to trick you to use your mind to strengthen his hold on humanity with a gospel of religious pretense and pointless suffering. If you fall for this trap, he could make you even less effective than an anti-intellectual. Worse, he could turn you into an enemy of the gospel even as you think you defend it.

The Bible says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. The devil corrupts the whole man, not only his spirit, but also his health, his labor, his relationships, everything. Jesus saves the whole man — more powerfully and completely than the devil can corrupt it. A gospel that portrays Jesus as a partial savior is a false gospel. It is heresy to suggest that the devil's works are more comprehensive than the redemption of Christ. The thief comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy — not just your spirit or your morality, but everything. Jesus called sickness satanic bondage, and Peter called sickness demonic oppression. They started to eradicate it right away. The thief steals, kills, and destroys — now, not later. Jesus has come that you might have life, and to have it abundantly — now, not later. Jesus saves the whole man, breathing life into every part of his life, right now, by faith. Any message that differs or delays is false gospel. So this is the direction you should go with all your might — faith in the whole word of God.

From: email

9. "He has to deal with Jesus theology..."

"The problem with prosperity theology is not that it promises too much, but that it aims for so little. What God promises us in Christ is far above anything that can be measured in earthly wealth — and believers are not promised earthly wealth nor the gift of health." (Albert Mohler)

I am encouraged that you are able to perceive Mohler's error and criticize it yourself. The truth does not belong to any one person, but to all who read and believe Scripture. The biblical teaching is not my private opinion, but the Scripture plainly says what it says. Mohler's statement is standard rhetoric of unbelief. The false dilemma is dishonest and manipulative, a good example of religious sophistry. What makes me indignant about this is not only that he is wrong, but he seems to think that Christians are idiots. He expects YOU to swallow this and be convinced by this. Even if certain things are more important than others, God can promise both something less significant and something more significant. In this context, we do not even have to rank them. If God promises both things, then he promises both things.

If there is something wrong with what is usually called prosperity theology, then we can criticize what is wrong with it. But Mohler fails to address what is truly wrong with it, if anything. Even if there is something wrong with it as a package, we can throw away the whole package and just talk about what the Bible says. He has to deal with Jesus theology, not prosperity theology. I do not care what "prosperity theology" promises. Jesus promises many things. What are they? Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). What are "all these things"? He was talking about money, food, and clothing (v. 24-31). He was talking about things that "the pagans run after" (v. 32). He also said, "The Father knows you need them all" (v. 32). If we worry about them, it is because we have too little faith (v. 30).

Since these are things that "the pagans run after," there is no way to put a spiritual or figurative spin on them. This is very much "earthly wealth." And since Jesus placed them under faith and the fatherhood of God, this is gospel material. It is not some fringe issue or doctrine. This is gospel. Thus to deny that Jesus theology promises money, food, clothing, and such things is to speak against the fatherhood of God, against Jesus Christ, against faith, and against the gospel. What is prosperity theology? I don't care. This is Jesus theology, and we don't hear Mohler teaching it. Let people like him put down prosperity theology and prosperity preachers. I don't care, but he is only condemning himself, because where he is wrong about them, he commits slander, and where he is right about them, he condemns himself, because he is much worse in that his doctrine is even less faithful to the gospel.

Whether I agree with them on this or that, the prosperity preachers that I know constantly remind people to "seek first the kingdom of God." They say this over and over again. Even if they do not mean it, they say it more than their critics. They also know that Jesus said,

"one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). This is how they set up their message as they speak about prosperity. And then these prosperity preachers also say, "and all these things will be added to you." What things? The things that the pagans run after — money, food, and clothing. The pagans do not seek only a little of these things. They want a lot of them. Jesus also had abundance in mind, since he said we should consider the flowers and the grass, and they were better dressed than Solomon. Now if Mohler condemns Jesus for bringing the pagans into this, we will let that slide for now, but Jesus even staked the fatherhood of God on this, and Mohler still says NO. So whatever we say about prosperity theology, we can say that anti-prosperity theology is much worse.

As for "the gift of health," of course the Bible promises it. As if it is possible, this is even more "gospel" than the promises of prosperity. God is one who "forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:2). He said, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation" (Psalm 91:16). Jesus "took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). He said that a descendant of Abraham ought to receive healing, even on the Sabbath, or especially on the Sabbath (Luke 13:16). It was her covenant right. He said that healing was to the people of the covenant as bread was to the children of a household (Matthew 15:26). It was taken for granted. Then Paul said that we who are of faith are the children of Abraham. If we wish to be technical about it, healing is more than a promise, but a possession. Money in your account is not a promise, but a possession. You will need to take the money out to use it, but it already belongs to you.

Does Mohler teach this? Does he heal the sick and cast out demons, especially on the Sabbath, or is he too busy talking about his politics? If some wonder why they have not been experiencing these promises, our reply is that we have indeed been experiencing them, because we believe them. And if God's people have not been experiencing these things in the measure specified by these promises, it is because of the teachers of unbelief. The benefits of the gospel are received when they are preached and believed (Galatians 3:5). Christians must either silence the false teachers, or at least stop listening to them. The people have confessed the Lord Jesus, and now they face the wrath of Satan, but their leaders remove the promises of God that would enable them to succeed. They profit from the people's suffering. Since some people have asked, I am being literal when I say such things about these false teachers, and I have not nearly portrayed the full extent of their sin. The real issue is that no one can defend them against me, because I am right about all of this. This is the truth, and it is time for all of us to accept how horrible it is to have these people leading the charge against...well, apparently against the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From: email

10. "When it comes to WCF XXI..."

When it comes to WCF XXI.1, I am in general agreement with the wording of the WCF, but I disagree with the intended meaning of the framers, and I disagree with the practice of those who follow the WCF. It would be difficult to disagree with a statement that says we must worship God as he prescribes, and not according to the inventions of men and Satan!

We must make some qualifications. Certain innovations should be permitted in church, but we should not necessarily call that worship. For example, I see nothing wrong with presenting a play, or puppets, or games when dealing with children, but that would not be worship. Church members can do all sorts of things together, including having coffee, playing soccer, etc., but that would not be worship — except in the very general sense of living in unity before the face of God. For this reason, I think that the main gathering should be reserved for preaching and such things, and not for plays and games.

You mentioned dances, and that would be a good example to make a distinction. I do not believe that performance dances should be permitted in a main gathering, and it should not be considered worship. However, the Bible indeed teaches dance as worship, when individuals are so full of joy that they jump and dance in praise of God, along with loud shouts and singing, as David and others did. This has been neglected and discouraged in traditional churches, to their shame. But dances and songs as performances to men, I would reject.

Then, as a cessationist document, the WCF in fact rejects biblical worship, and contradicts its own article in XXI.1. Paul said that when we come together, each one should have a song, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue or interpretation. And each one may prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and be encouraged. I do not say that this has to be done always in every Sunday or main gathering, but a church must find a setting for this to happen, otherwise, it would be in direct opposition to biblical worship. Also Jesus demonstrated that acts of kindness like healing the sick ought to be performed on the Sabbath. Therefore, the Sunday service should usually be accompanied by the laying on of hands to heal the sick, with miracles. Any church that does not do this is in disobedience.

The Bible mandates the participation of all members, and this participation is by the power of the Spirit. In this, the charismatics are far more obedient. However, they must learn to regulate these activities, as Paul also instructed.

Whether following the WCF or not, traditional churches often commit the same error as those who opposed Christ in the past. They are eager to follow the traditions of men, often in place of the commands of God, and forgetting judgment, mercy, and faith. As Jesus said, "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'" But traditional churches often force God to accept sacrifice, and do not teach or receive his mercy, such as in miracles of healing. And Jesus also said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," which many who claim to be rigidly faithful also forget.

I am not in full agreement with the wording of XXI.5, but I will not take time to explain in this reply. The above already goes a long way to make my position clear.

From: email

11. "Jesus commanded extreme exponential expansion..."

The expansion that the Bible talks about is spiritual, not political. If it results in political change, it would do so only indirectly. As the gospel expands to influence more people in more levels of society, then those people would naturally favor policies that are biblical. But the expansion is explicitly spiritual — it refers to a pervasiveness of spiritual ideas and powers, including miraculous powers. To directly focus on the political is to commit the very thing that Jesus condemned — "for you care about the things of men, and not the things of God." The Christian obsession with politics is a natural lust, an idol, and a replacement for the promise of power in the gospel, which the spiritually feeble and wayward have rejected because of unbelief.

As for expansionism in the context of the cessationism vs. continuationism debate, my position is that both are wrong, or at least the latter is too weak and misleading. Cessationism is an outright rejection of the gospel. Continuationism is much better; however, because it allows the anti-gospel group to define the terms of the doctrine, it is also a compromise of the gospel. It also neglects the fact that Jesus commanded extreme exponential expansion, not mere continuation. The gospel doctrine is that the miraculous works of Christ should be performed by more kinds of believers, by more multitudes of believers, in more geographical areas, and that this power should increase from generation to generation. Cessationism condemns this essential gospel principle. Continuationism is completely inadequate to represent this. Continuationism is so very lame compared to what the gospel actually teaches.

You asked how we would relate this nonnegotiable pillar of the gospel to the school of thought that wishes to apply God's law to reconstruct society. The answer is that anyone who adheres to such a school of thought, but who is a cessationist, is also a liar and a hypocrite. If one wishes to reconstruct society with the law of God, he must do it with the gospel, and the gospel is as I stated above — expanding the participation and magnitude of the saving message and miracle power of God in the name of Jesus Christ. Like any cessationist, the cessationist who wishes to reconstruct society is not interested in extending Christ's kingdom, but in enforcing his own personal philosophy about the proper operation of society. He seeks to mold society in his own image — perhaps a conservative political philosophy labeled "Christian" — but not anything like the image of Christ.

As Jesus said, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." In other words, Jesus preached the gospel, and healed the sick, healed the sick, healed the sick, healed the sick, and healed the sick. Multitudes of Christians are offended by such a Jesus. They want a political Christ to save America, to save China, or some such thing. But the only Jesus is one who preaches, and then heals, and heals, and heals, and heals, and heals with miracles. This is the only Jesus, and the only gospel. If you do not want this Jesus, there is no other, and you cannot be saved, let alone reshape society! If you want to save America or any other place, preach the gospel, and heal the sick, heal the sick, heal the

sick, heal the sick, and heal the sick with miracles. This is the only legitimate method. If there is more to it, there is not less to it, and this is at least how you start, or you are not on God's program at all.

A program that seeks to change society by Jesus Christ would preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, prophesy, and work all kinds of signs and wonders before it even considers a direct assault on politics, education, and so on. If we are to reshape society to the point of influencing its policies, it must be an effect of expansionism by spiritual and miraculous power. No cessationist should think about a political agenda, because he does not even believe the gospel. If you face the biblical doctrine of expansionism, and then immediately think about how it applies to politics, you are already defeated. Satan has started to hijack it away from you. Satan is not afraid of politics and laws. He would be fine if you regulate human behavior without changing hearts. Christians have been in denial about how much they have deviated from the spiritual program commissioned by Jesus Christ. They have fallen so far behind that they must return focus to the increase of spiritual and miraculous power for at least several centuries before thinking about anything else, if they should ever think about anything else.

12. "The way to honor the historical martyrs is..."

You are correct that those who are regarded as Christian martyrs in history seemed to lack faith in the gospel concerning the miraculous. It is also true that a person can think that he is a martyr for the faith, but then goes straight to hell when he dies. This is what happens when he has a lot of zeal merely as a function of his personality, but no genuine faith in the gospel, or if he dies for something that is not the gospel at all. Even non-Christian religions have their martyrs, but their deaths evince only their delusion.

True Christians who die for their faith are heroes, and we would not want to take this honor away from them. They are our examples. We gladly make this acknowledgment, and express our gratitude and admiration. That said, right is right, and wrong is wrong. Consider the apostle Peter, who transgressed a most elementary principle of the gospel when he stopped eating with the Gentiles at Antioch. What made this especially inexcusable was that God himself told him in a vision, "Do not call anything unclean that God has made clean." Right is right, wrong is wrong, and Peter was wrong. Therefore, Paul publicly rebuked him and withstood him to his face.

Thus we see the gospel of Jesus Christ possesses higher authority than even an apostle of Jesus Christ. God indeed attested to the gospel through the apostles after the Lord first declared it, but when they transgressed this standard -- and it was possible, as Peter demonstrated -- they were censured by this same standard. Paul said that if "we" -- anyone who brought the gospel to the people in the first place -- if anyone, including himself, preached a different gospel than the one he delivered, then let him be accursed. In fact, he said that even if an angel "from heaven" -- not a demonic impostor -- preached a different gospel, let him also be accursed. He said this indiscriminately to the Galatians, to a group of unstable and ordinary Christians. So it does not require an apostle to confront an apostle or angel who teaches false doctrine. Any believer has the authority to disagree with even a real apostle or angel if he comes with a gospel different from the one already delivered. The gospel possesses the very authority of God. It is a standard that can judge any apostle or angel. Since this is the case, we should much more eagerly acknowledge the errors in our heroes, scholars, and creeds, regardless of how much history and tradition pressure us to respect them.

What is this gospel, once-for-all delivered? Within a short space in this same letter to the Galatians, we observe at least three pillars of truth. First, Christ the Son has come in the flesh through a woman (4:4). Thus we affirm the divinity and humanity of Christ. Second, Christ the Redeemer has atoned for sin by his death (3:1). We affirm justification by faith alone, without the works of the law. Third, Christ the Baptizer has endowed his people with miracle power by his Spirit, and that God works miracles among his people not because of the works of the law, and not because of persons and periods, but because the people believe the gospel (3:5). Therefore, we affirm that Christians can receive superhuman and supernatural power by the Spirit, and that miracles, prophecies, and other signs and wonders are available to each one because of faith, and not only because of special gifts and ministries. As a Christian, I have the authority to smite any genuine apostle

or even an angel from heaven who preaches a message that deviates from these pillars of the gospel. God is greater than any apostle or angel, and this is the gospel he has established. This third point is inseparable from the gospel, because it is the gospel. It is the gospel just like the first point is the gospel, and just like the second point is the gospel. In fact, Paul uses this third point as proof for the second point.

The Bible provides us with its own martyrs, and these are heroes and examples that the inspired record wishes us to follow. They are our prototypes, and offer us more excellent patterns and promises. The Bible has much to say about suffering for the faith, and one way the martyrs glorified God was their testimony and experience of the miraculous.

Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but the next day he was able to say to the king, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were about to be thrown into a furnace, and they said to the king, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." They said that they would remain true to God "even if he does not" deliver them from death. They had the spirit of martyrdom, and they were prepared to die for God, but at the same time, they had faith that God would rescue them. What happened? The flames killed those who threw them into the furnace, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego themselves were not harmed. When they came out, the king saw that their clothes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. They did not merely survive, but they completely triumphed. And they triumphed not only in spirit or in attitude, but they dominated the natural forces.

Herod had imprisoned Peter, and intended to bring him before the people. As Peter was asleep between two soldiers, bound with chains, the angel of the Lord came to him. He had to hit Peter to wake him, and the chains fell off from his hands. The iron gate opened by itself, and the apostle walked out to freedom. Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed. In prison, they prayed and sang praises to God. Suddenly there came an earthquake so violent that the very foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors were opened, and everybody's chains were loosed. Paul wrote that he received lashes five times, he was beaten with rods three times, and once he was stoned. Any one of these instances could have disabled or sometimes killed a man, but he was still traveling and preaching. He demonstrated in his body the healing and sustaining power of God. Sometimes suffering for the gospel is not caused by man. Paul was shipwrecked three times, but he lived. He was bitten by a viper, but he was immune.

One might argue that not every person in the Bible who suffered for the faith experienced miraculous deliverance. However, this reminder is self-damning, because it acknowledges that many of them indeed experienced miraculous deliverance, so that at least some of us should experience the same if we belong to the same heritage. If we do not expect at least some of us to experience the same spectacular and miraculous deliverance, then the remark that not all of them in the Bible experienced deliverance would be meaningless, since we have entirely cut ourselves off from the biblical pattern in the first place. If we have cut ourselves off from the biblical martyrs, then to appeal to them only results in

condemnation. Nevertheless, even those who died often experienced the power of God. For example, as Stephen was stoned to death, he received one of the most wonderful visions recorded in Scripture – he saw the very glory of God and Jesus Christ standing at his right hand. And he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Do not hold this sin against them." Then the disciples scattered and preached the gospel wherever they went, and the word of God increased in influence. What a hero of the faith! He brought triumph to the gospel in life and in death. Some martyrs in the Bible died without fanfare, but of course not one of them was a cessationist, and they often experienced the revelations and miracles of God throughout their lives.

Sometimes we indeed come across testimonies about God's miraculous deliverance of those who face persecution. Although we probably hear about only a fraction of these, we still wish that there are more of them, and we work toward this end by teaching the truth about God's power as the gospel -- not as part of the gospel, but as the gospel, just like the deity of Christ is the gospel, just like the atonement by Christ is the gospel. Power from Christ is also the gospel.

There was a missionary who was surrounded by some tribesmen, and he said to his companions, "These men intend to execute us. Let us commit our lives to God before we leave this tent and face them." So they knelt and prayed. But when they walked out, the people dropped their weapons. They fell on their faces and worshiped. Later the tribesmen explained that when the Christians came out of the tent, they saw coming out behind them large human-like creatures dressed in white and armed with swords. When the missionary told the story back in the United States, one woman told him that she was moved to pray in tongues for a long time one night, and had the impression that she was interceding for his life. When she showed him the record in her diary, he realized that it was the same date and time of his encounter with the tribesmen. An account like this should not surprise us. It sounds wonderful, but also normal. There is nothing here that stretches the expectation or the imagination of any ordinary reader of the Bible.

We ought to expect such occurrences as a matter-of-course. And if we refuse to believe someone's testimony, we should at least believe the Scripture. When the king of Aram sent a large army of horses and chariots to surround Dothan in order to seize Elisha, the prophet's servant panicked and said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Elisha answered, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then he prayed, "Lord, open his eyes that he may see," and the servant saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. Why would anyone consider it incredible that several of these -- or several thousand of these -- would also stand behind a missionary of the gospel? And why would anyone consider it incredible that sometimes they could become visible? The only explanation is spiritual blindness. The only explanation is a wicked, stubborn, demonic unbelief. A person can call himself a scholar, a defender of the faith, a servant of "the prophet" or Scripture, and be spiritually blind. Spiritually stupid.

The way to honor the biblical martyrs is to follow their examples of courage, faith, and doctrine. And the way to honor the historical martyrs is to follow their courage, but in faith

and doctrine to believe even those things in the gospel that they rejected due to their sin, unbelief, and ignorance. Surely, if they loved the Lord Jesus enough to die for him, they would also want everyone after them to have more faith and to believe more of the gospel than they did. Surely they would not want anyone to have less faith and to believe less of the gospel. The greatest insult to the legacy of the martyrs come from those who perpetuate the satanic lies that God no longer works miracles as he does in the Bible, that God's promises mean something other than what they clearly say, and that God's powers were exclusively restricted to certain persons and periods. If the martyrs suffered and died for their testimony about the word of God, then we must never allow this word of God to become a mere memorial to us, but we must live out what it says, and all of what it says.

From: emails

13. Exclusive Psalmody

Many theological controversies make excellent entertainment for demons. Satan must find it hilarious to watch Christians argue back and forth over something that none of them believes. Those who insist on exclusive psalmody, or to sing only the Psalms in worship, do not believe the Psalms. And those who spend much time arguing against exclusive psalmody usually do not believe either. Those who believe the Psalms are often busy with their own meaningful projects.

The exclusive psalmody people exclaim, "The Psalms of the Lord, the Psalms of the Lord," but what do the Psalms say? Sing only the Psalms? Can they even move beyond Psalm 1? They start to sing, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." If they survive this far, then they have to sing, "Whatever he does shall prosper."

A man who refuses to stand with sinners, but who delights in the word of God and thinks about it day and night, can expect success in whatever he does. This is not figurative or "spiritual" success, because God said the same thing to Joshua, and there he clearly meant success as a spiritual, military, financial, and national leader. This would include success in knowing God, in following God, in military strategy and planning, in physical health and training, in business and education, in financial prosperity and wealth distribution, and many other things. "Whatever" Joshua had to do, and in his position he had to do everything, he would have success. To sing the Psalms would be to sing a doctrine of success, a success that is immune to the usual underhanded tricks to spiritualize or allegorize the biblical promises that tradition wishes to destroy.

This alone would shut down the exclusive psalmody camps, not only their doctrine of exclusive psalmody, but all the doctrines, policies, creeds, churches, seminaries, and denominations commonly associated with those who affirm exclusive psalmody, because they refuse to acknowledge this biblical promise of total success. Of course, most of those who call themselves Christians do not believe Psalm 1, or a thousand other parts of the Bible, so that they are shut down as well, but we are focusing the attention on exclusive psalmody camps right now because they insist on exclusively singing the Psalms, and this is our topic.

So we are already finished by Psalm 1:3, and likely even before that, since like most others, these same people are "scoffers" against the promises of God for wellness and miracles, so that they are in fact stopped at verse 1. Again, this does not apply only to the exclusive psalmody camps, because any group that affirms unbelief is cut off by Psalm 1 by the time we reach verse 3. There is no way to go further.

Nevertheless, we will force ourselves to continue, because when someone says that we should sing the Psalms exclusively, people from both sides of the issue become excited about the disagreement and they wish to fight about the principle forever. But I want to

consider that which they do not care about: What do the Psalms say? There are so many items that we can discuss, so we must move quickly, and it will be a little messy.

Psalm 18

"For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall" (v. 29). This is a declaration of supernatural energy and achievement. This is what we can expect in people who have faith in God and the Spirit of God.

Samson uprooted the city gate and posts with his bare hands, and carried them up to the top of a hill (Judges 16:3). Elijah ran so much faster than a king's chariot that even though the king had a head start, the prophet overtook it and arrived at his destination before the king (1 Kings 18:46).

If we belong to the same family of faith, and Hebrews 11 is clear that Christians indeed follow this heritage, then we ought to expect to perform similar superhuman feats. And to sing Psalm 18 is to make a faith confession that this is indeed available to us. It is to say, "By God, I have supernatural power. In Christ, I have superhuman strength."

As Paul said, "To this end I labor, striving according to his energy, which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:29). Ephesians 1 tells us that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is working for us (v. 19). And Ephesians 3 tells us that God will give us more than we ask or think by this power that is working in us (v. 20).

Sing it! Let the whole church declare that we can wield this miracle energy even in our bodies. Let us declare this exclusively, and never sing anything to contradict or compromise this. If we sing this exclusively, then it means that all songs and talks and all sermons and doctrines that speak of weak health and energy and inability are excluded and condemned.

Psalm 23

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall have no lack." Sing it! Is this only referring to spiritual lack? This is a typical excuse. The same ones who warn people not to spiritualize and allegorize Scripture would spiritualize and allegorize like a madman when confronted with scriptures that they do not wish to believe. But Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them," referring to the things that the pagans seek, such as food, clothing, and money (Matthew 6:32).

"He makes me lie down in green pastures" -- not rotten pastures. Sing it! "He leads me beside still waters" -- not raging waters. Sing it! Sing about the prosperity and tranquility that come from the divine shepherd.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." It has been said that many revered

Christian leaders in history had suffered lifelong depression, and it is often portrayed as normal. This is despicable. If we sing the Psalms exclusively, then we must deny that this is legitimate Christian experience. The Lord is a good and mighty shepherd. He comforts me, and his comfort is stronger than death. Depression cannot survive under divine comfort.

Before anyone complains about a doctrine of triumphalism or a lack of sympathy, let me state that I was one who suffered crippling depression when I was first converted. Jesus Christ changed everything. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness had commanded light to shine in my darkness as well. The difference with these so-called Christian leaders is that I believed the word of God and declared deliverance by faith, and I completely triumphed. Why? The Lord had been my shepherd, and he comforted me with his truth and power. His comfort was stronger than depression. He annihilated the inner prison, and I became more stable and happy than those who have never had depression.

Psalm 42 says, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God!" Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." And he said, "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them." My joy does not waver, and my joy is never weak, because I have the joy of Jesus Christ in full measure. Paul said that joy is a fruit of the spirit. Joy is as natural to the believer as "the works of the flesh" are to the sinner, such as idolatry, strife, jealousy, and anger (Galatians 5).

Depression has no place in the Christian. There is no religious glory or redemptive purpose in a prolonged struggle with depression, let alone a lifelong struggle. But if you romanticize it, identify with it, and associate it with piety, then you will hold on to it. If you abide in the vine that is Christ, and if you walk in the spirit, then you will naturally have joy – invincible and overflowing joy. Declare your joy in Christ by faith, regardless of your feelings, and declare your freedom from depression. If you wish, sing the Psalms against depression. But do not look to depressed leaders as heroes. For all their attainments, they were defeated and deceived in that area.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." This is spectacular. These people faced wars and assassinations, not a pathetic problem like your unbelieving professor or your obnoxious mother-in-law. Even though there might be those who hate me and oppose me, God will protect me, and cause me to prosper -- to have a feast – right in front of them. Sing it!

"I shall have no lack." But this does not mean that I will only have barely enough, because "you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Sing it! I will have an overabundance of everything I need, because he makes my cup overflow.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Sing it! There is no perhaps, no maybe, no "I hope and pray," no "if it is his will," but sing "surely" -- it is certain that this will happen. It is guaranteed. What goodness? It is "I will have no lack."

What mercy? It is "I will fear no evil." And it is not a general or occasional thing, but it will be this way "all the days of my life."

All the days of my life, it is guaranteed that I will have no lack, no fear, total comfort, total protection, total anointing, total prosperity, to the point of overflowing. To sing the Psalms exclusively is to have an exclusive faith confession of such a doctrine, and to permit no alternative or compromise.

Psalm 30

"O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me." Sing it! This work of healing is as one that raises the dead, for he says, "O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit." Deliverance from fatal sickness or judgment.

Do not whisper it to yourself. Scream it out in song! You with cancer. Sing it: "God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me." And the cancer dies. You in that wheelchair. Sing it: "God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me." Now stand up and walk.

As the Bible says, "The prayer of faith [God, I cried to you for help] will heal the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up [and you have healed me]." And it says, "Himself took our infirmities, and carried our sicknesses." Sing it!

To sing the Psalms exclusively is to sing about miracle healing exclusively, and to never sing about an acceptance of sickness. But others have no excuse. Anyone who sings the Psalms at all must refuse to live with sickness.

Psalm 91

"For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence," or in another translation, "For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease." And "Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday." Invincible to every sickness. Immune to every deadly epidemic.

When an epidemic rolls in like a flood, Christians should be able to turn it back, literally with their bare hands, because Jesus said, "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." However, the church has been damnably rebellious in this ministry of healing, and handed the glory that belongs to God alone to the men of medicine. But medicine is in fact too weak to face the onslaughts of disease, and thus the church is responsible for the suffering and deaths of countless people through the centuries. Christians who do not teach and minister miracle healing are murderers.

What? Do we not want to sing the Psalms anymore? I command you in the name of Christ, sing it! Sing before the whole church, "God will deliver you from every trap and from every terminal sickness and deadly epidemic. He will make you immune to every

poisonous substance and biological weapon." Sing it! Sing it exclusively. Don't you dare sing anything different.

"You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day." Invincible to wars and weapons. Impenetrable to bullets. Sing it! I have heard of a few instances where Christians shielded themselves by the name of Jesus and bullets shot toward them at point-blank range were diverted to the side or to the ground. They did not put themselves into those situations for amusement, as if to put God to the test, but they found themselves in those situations, and called on the name of the Lord.

"A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you." Impervious to massive attacks, widespread failures and fatalities. This easily applies to any kind of mass slaughter, even by weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The promise is not only that the weapons will not be used against you, but that even if they are used against you, you will be immune to their effects. The weapons can strike directly on top of you, so that ten thousand fall at your side, but it will not affect you.

The king ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be thrown into the fire. The flames killed the soldiers who came near the furnace, but these three believers walked around in the flames and came out unharmed -- even their clothes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. Thus it is reasonable to believe that God would shield his people from weapons of mass destruction even when they are detonated right on top of them and killing those around them. Even among the "word of faith" people, very few could sincerely reach for this level in their faith confessions, so I applaud you if you are able to sing this before everyone. Sing it! Make that faith confession of total protection. Don't let me catch you say anything that contradicts this.

If we find that we have not attained to the promises of God, the worst thing that we can do is to claim that they mean something else in order to justify ourselves. The only correct course is to teach them, sing them, and talk about them even more, so that we can at least head toward that direction, rather than abandoning faith in God altogether. We have to acknowledge that the promises of God obviously mean what they say, if we are to have a chance to receive them. If we reject them or mock them, and if we attack rather than cherish those who teach them, then there is no chance we will attain them.

"If you make the Most High your dwelling -- even the LORD, who is my refuge -- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent." Sing it! It does not say, "If it is the will of God in a specific instance, then he will protect you this time." No, it says, "If you make" -- you -- "the Most High your dwelling," then no harm will happen to you and no disaster can come near you. If you want to sing the Psalms, then sing this. Sing that you will make the Most High your dwelling, and then sing that no harm and no disaster can come near you.

"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Total

protection. This protection is so absolute and so supernatural that a person can fall from a tall building and expect to be unharmed. Satan used this scripture to urge Jesus to jump from the top of the temple. Jesus did not refute Satan's understanding of the passage, but only stated that it should not be abused: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Likewise, we can expect to be immune to poisons and diseases, but this does not mean we should drink poison for entertainment or to show off your faith. If Satan could teleport Jesus to the top of the temple, why didn't he push him off and be done with it? Because then Jesus would not have been testing God. Psalm 91 would have come into effect, and Jesus would not have died from falling off the building.

Although in the temptation of Christ, Satan demonstrated by his hermeneutics much more faith in God than most Christian theologians, especially the theologians of unbelief, tradition, and cessationism, there is no need to rely on the devil for the proper interpretation. The text says that the angels will "guard you in all your ways" and that they will "bear you up." If they will "bear you up," then of course this applies to falling from a building. Anyone who disagrees with this is less qualified than the devil to teach Christian theology and Bible interpretation.

"You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent." Total dominance over evil and its agents. As Paul said, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" -- not under his feet, but your feet.

"Because he loves me, I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." Promise of rescue, protection, answer to prayer, deliverance, and honor. Promise of long life -- immunity from sickness, from disaster, and from early death. Sing it! If you want to sing the Psalms, then sing this.

When you sing, don't ever let me catch you embracing sickness, failure, tragedy, danger, or anything other than total protection, victory, healing, honor, and long life. Do you still want to sing the Psalms, and only the Psalms? Excellent, then I charge you in the presence of God to never sing anything other than supernatural protection and healing and triumph, or may the judgment of God fall upon you. If you disown the promises of the Psalms, then may the God of the Psalms also disown you.

Stop playing games. Do you think you can avoid the word of God forever by pretending to be stuck in some theological tug of war? You are not stuck. You can see exactly what the word of God says. If you are so sure that I am wrong, then wager your soul on it. I dare you. But whether you are willing or not, you are already doing it once I have shown you the word of God. You are super stupid if you think that you can just sit back and wait, and debate, and criticize forever, pretending that you are seeking truth when the truth has been made clear to you. You have no choice. You are either saved by the word of God, or you are damned by it.

Psalm 103

"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." Yes, sing it! Let's go! My body is bobbing back and forth to this as I write! I love to praise the Lord. Praise him for his loving kindness. Praise him for his grace and might in our salvation by Jesus Christ.

"Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Total forgiveness -- "forgives all your sins." Total healing -- "heals all your diseases." Redeemed to life. Crowned with love. There is more than total healing, but also renewed youth -- "your youth is renewed like the eagle's." What a faith confession. Healing for all diseases and immunity from aging or reversal of aging are just as much associated with the nature of God and the benefits of redemption as the forgiveness of sins.

When you say you only sing the Psalms, this is what you want, right? What? You want to sing about sin, sickness, poverty, defeat, tragedy, sadness, and old age? Too late. You said you want to sing the Psalms. Sing before the whole church: "Praise the Lord! Forget not all his benefits!" What benefits? "He heals all your diseases!" "He renews your youth!" The prevention or reversal of old age is an ordinary aspect of redemption, received by faith. It was demonstrated in Abraham and Sarah, and the Bible says that we who are of faith have inherited the blessings of Abraham. It was also demonstrated in Moses and Caleb. So, sing it! I will force you to sing it. SING. IT.

You want the Psalms? Good. I will waterboard you with the Psalms. If you sing "forget not his benefits," but then attack those who teach these benefits, sing these benefits, and receive these benefits, including the healing of all diseases, then do you not prove yourself a hypocrite and a reprobate? If you sing "he heals all your diseases," but then never pray for the sick or receive miracle healing for yourself, then who are you singing to? The doctors? The demons? Now, SING.

Psalm 107

"Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death." Some people are sick because they are stupid ("some were fools") and because they are sinful ("because of their iniquities"). As Jesus said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." This is referring to physical sickness, not spiritual sickness -- "they loathed any kind of food." This is referring not to mild sickness, but even terminal sickness -- "they drew near to the gates of death."

So it is anti-Psalms to deny that some sicknesses come because of sin, and it is anti-Psalms to say that sickness is a gift from God, coming upon the righteous to teach them something or to bring glory to God. Jesus called sickness satanic bondage (Luke 13:16), and Peter called it satanic oppression (Acts 10:38). And Jesus said that God was glorified by miracle

healing, not by sickness (John 11:4, 40). If someone says that he sings only the Psalms, then I would expect him to preach that sickness comes from sin and the devil, and that only miracle healing by faith brings glory to God.

"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction." Sing it! If someone says he sings only the Psalms, then I would expect him to preach that sickness is healed by repentance and prayer. As James said, "The prayer of faith will heal one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." If someone sings the Psalms, then he must be one of the strongest practitioners of miracle healing. He will not walk around the issue, or explain it away. He will throw himself into it completely, and exclusively.

"He sent his word and healed them." God's word causes healing, the opposite of sickness. As the Bible says, "For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh." God's word does not only heal the spirit, but heals "all their flesh." If someone sings the Psalms, then he must believe that God sends his word to heal people, not something else. Anyone who believes the Psalms will preach this, and he will even sing it! He will commit exclusively to miracle healing by faith in the word of God.

Psalm 112

"Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!" What does "blessed" mean? "His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed." This is a grand promise, but if it is too vague to you, here comes the money.

"Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever." This is not spiritual wealth, but dirty, filthy, MAMMON. Paul uses Psalm 112:9 in 2 Corinthians 9:9, and there he refers to a donation of money that he collects for Christians in Jerusalem. There is no way to allegorize your way out of this, and why would you want to?

Do you still want to sing it? And remember, Psalm 107 says, "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so." You have to sing it, and you must also say it. If you praise the Lord in your songs, then you cannot curse the Lord in your speech. So sing it, and then say it: "Praise the Lord! I fear the Lord and delight in his commandments. So I am blessed. My offspring will be successful. I will have wealth and riches."

What a faith confession. To sing only the Psalms is looking like a better and better idea. The Psalms are infested with health and wealth. Wait, why are you leaving? Come back! Sing!

Suffering Psalms

The Psalms often contain expressions of suffering, and this might be used as an excuse for unbelief. However, the mere mention of suffering means nothing. What is the context of the suffering? And what happens to the suffering?

Of course the Psalms refer to suffering, but they do not say that God rescued and blessed a person, and then despite God's blessing the person lost everything and suffered. They declare the opposite. The Psalms say that a person suffered and lost everything, but God rescued and blessed him, and changed his life for the better.

They are not stories of how human suffering triumphs over divine blessing, but how divine blessing triumphs over human suffering. The Psalms do not say that suffering overcomes redemption, but that redemption overcomes suffering, often by miraculous deliverance, healing, prosperity, and victory.

Psalm 34 says, "The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all" -- from all of them. A righteous person may only have a few problems, or he may have many, but God will match and exceed all of them with his deliverance.

Psalm 73 says, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." My heart in itself may fail, but God is the strength of my heart. God cannot fail, so my heart will never fail.

Psalm 107 clearly recognizes the reality of sickness, but the men cried out to God, and "he sent his word and healed them." As James said, "Is any of you sick?" He indeed mentions suffering, but then he says we should destroy this suffering by faith. The sick will be healed, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Thus the objection backfires, because it draws attention to the fact that the Psalms acknowledge human suffering, and address it with divine blessing, eliminating this excuse for unbelief. The Psalms do not sing about suffering as a mere psychological release, and they do not sing to God as if he is a mere psychological crutch. The Psalms do not validate suffering, but it sings about God's solution against it.

On the other hand, the only way that the objection would make sense is for it to suggest that human suffering overcomes divine blessing, for otherwise there would be no reason to mention suffering in the Psalms as an objection to what we have said. This is blasphemy toward God, rejection of the Psalms and the Scripture, and thus also a forfeiture of salvation.

Messianic Psalms

The Psalms also contain messianic promises and prophecies, and this might be used as an excuse for unbelief, as if the blessings of God do not apply to us. The strange thing is that those who preach suffering from the Psalms do not assert that the suffering is limited to the

Messiah. When the Bible refers to suffering, it applies to everybody, but when the Bible refers to blessing somehow it always refers to someone else. When I hear that something is a messianic promise, I hear, "This is secured for me in Christ, and no one can take it from me." But when they hear that something is a messianic promise, they say, "This is for him, not for you. Good luck, buddy, you're on your own." Isn't that funny? Isn't that curious? Isn't that...demonic?

In any case, let us address the objection. Take Psalm 41. It says, "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." We know that this is messianic, because John wrote about Jesus, "But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me'" (John 13:18). However, the fact that it is messianic does not mean that the Psalm applies to nobody else. It is first a Psalm of David, and verse 4 says, "O LORD, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you." If a text that is messianic applies only to the Messiah, this would mean that Jesus committed sin against God. Thus anyone who uses messianic prophecies this way renounces his own salvation. But if Jesus never sinned, then it means that a text that is messianic might not apply only to the Messiah.

Moreover, many of the Psalms explicitly require general application to those who fit the descriptions. We will use some of the Psalms we discussed to illustrate. Psalm 1 refers to a righteous man. If God expects all of us to delight in his word, then we must expect all of us who delight in his word to prosper. And he said the same thing to Joshua. Psalm 23 says that the Lord is my shepherd. Jesus is our shepherd, and so we can say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Psalm 103 says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases." Again, either we believe that this is only for the Messiah, so that we must believe that he sinned, and thus eject ourselves from salvation, or we believe that this is for us, so that we must believe that God heals all our diseases.

Psalm 2

Let us take Psalm 2 to combine the discussion on messianic prophecies in the Psalms and how the disciples applied the Psalms. Read Psalm 2. It is as messianic as it can get: "You are my Son; today I have begotten you" and "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

When the early disciples were persecuted, they cited Psalm 2:1-2 in prayer, and said, "You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed" (Acts 4:25-27).

The persecution came from political and religious authorities. What followed from this? Did they say, "God, give us better politicians! God, let us vote these people out of office! God, help us seize control of these seminaries!" This is what Christians say nowadays. But

the disciples appealed to Psalm 2, and said that the Scripture was being fulfilled, and prayed, "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (4:29-30).

There was persecution from political and religious authorities. Messianic prophecies were being fulfilled. The prophecies were about the Messiah, and not directly about them. But instead of praying for God to vindicate the Messiah apart from them, they used the messianic prophecies as a basis to pray for themselves. They prayed that God would enable them to continue to preach with boldness, and that God would continue to work miracles of healing, and signs and wonders by the name of Jesus. They applied the messianic prophecies to their own situation, and derived from it that they ought to preach the gospel and heal the sick, with signs and wonders.

If I have nothing but Psalm 2, I can have a ministry of preaching and healing, and signs and wonders. Psalm 2 belongs to the Messiah, and he had a ministry of preaching and healing, and signs and wonders. I operate under his banner and in his name, and therefore I also have a ministry of preaching and healing, and signs and wonders. The messianic prophecies guarantee this to me. All our discussions about faith, the gifts of the Spirit, and the promises of prophecies and miracles, serve to reinforce the doctrine more and more. But Psalm 2 alone is sufficient as our ticket to participate in the Messiah's ministry -- the most devastating miracle ministry the world has ever known: "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31).

If you sing Psalm 2, then preach with boldness. If you sing Psalm 2, then heal the sick and cast out demons. If you sing Psalm 2, then perform signs and wonders in the name of Jesus. If you do not preach, if you do not heal, and if you do not expect signs and wonders, then forget Psalm 2. Just forget about it. You do not believe it, and if you sing it, you sing damnation unto yourself. If in your worship you sing Psalm 2, and then in your sermon you attack those who heal the sick and believe in signs and wonders for today, that they are received by faith in the name of Jesus, then you damn yourself by your worship, and you damn yourself by your sermon.

If you argue for exclusive psalmody, and for that matter, even if you argue against exclusive psalmody, or if you act as if you care about the Psalms one way or the other, but if you do not believe the Psalms, then you damn yourself by your debate. He who sings the Psalms but refuses what the Psalms say might as well light himself on fire, with the fire of hell.

Self-Damning Worship

Those who disagree with exclusive psalmody are not better than the exclusive psalmody people, if they both refuse to believe the Psalms. But why are they like this? How can they sing the Psalms, whether exclusively or not, but reject what they say? "What right have

you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips?" (Psalm 50:16). How can they claim to revere the Psalms, but believe the opposite of what they teach?

Isaiah was right when he said of them, "This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men." And Jesus said, "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'"

How can they read the words, and never see what the words say? As Paul said, "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). This is a frightening explanation. The veil is taken away only through Christ when one turns to the Lord. If they see but cannot perceive, and if they hear but cannot understand, it can only mean that they do not have Christ, and they have not turned to the Lord. Paul continued, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 4:3). I have no authority to offer a different explanation.

It is self-damning to defend the principle of the inspiration of Scripture or the sufficiency of Scripture, and then refuse to believe what Scripture says. But those who defend cessationism do this as a routine. They call it apologetics! Those who teach unbeliefism make it their creed. They call it orthodoxy! It is self-damning to defend the principle of singing only the Psalms, or singing any of the Psalms, and then refuse to believe what the Psalms say. But those who sing the Psalms do this as a lifestyle. They call it worship!

Suppose you are a person who defends the principle that a man should love his wife and be faithful to her, and you even condemn those who disagree, but then you hate your wife, you beat your wife, you cheat on her, and you divorce her! Do you not condemn yourself? Now suppose you defend the Bible and condemn those who oppose it, but then you hate the Bible, you reject the Bible, you contradict the Bible in your doctrines and actions, and you criticize those who believe and obey the Bible. Do you not condemn yourself?

The truth is that you like to defend the idea of the Bible, and the idea that you defend the Bible, but you hate what is in the Bible. The Bible is only an idea to you, a mere symbol. You use it as a mascot or a banner for your religious posturing, but you hate what it says. This is what you do with God. This is what you do with Jesus Christ. You like the idea of God, and the idea of Christ, and even more the idea that you defend them, so that you can think of yourself as a spiritual hero and impress people with your piety and expertise. But you hate God, and you hate Jesus Christ, and you hate what they say. And so you damn yourself.

Here is my answer to exclusive psalmody. If you believe the Psalms, then you can sing whatever you want. If you do not believe the Psalms, then sit down and SHUT UP!!! Most churches would be better off singing "Jailhouse Rock" than whatever it is that they do during worship. (Look at the lyrics. One guy is having so much fun that he doesn't want to leave!) Then they would stop investing themselves, exclusively or not, in something that they do not believe.

The truth is that almost nobody believes the Psalms, so very few people in the whole of church history would have the right to say anything much about the matter, let alone compel me to agree with them. And as long as nobody believes the Psalms, the controversy is a huge waste of time. Let us first restore faith in the Scripture, before we work ourselves into a frenzy as to what we must do and with which part of what book and by whom we do it and where we can do it and at what time and for how long. Utter foolishness. What a bunch of worthless brats. Grow up.

14. Jargonized Theology

Many years ago, a short time after I had become a Christian, I read something written by one of the most well-known Christian apologists and cult watchers. He was attacking what the Bible teaches on faith, healing, prophecy, and such things. One standard method of the "defenders of the faith" is to select easy targets in unrefined preachers of the gospel rather than to produce biblical arguments. So he cited from a charismatic preacher who was teaching about a biblical doctrine, and who said something like, "You need to get the revelation of it in your spirit." The cult watcher seized upon this and declared that the preacher taught it was possible to receive "new revelations" from God today, in the sense that the words of Scripture were received by revelation. This was then used to issue a broader warning against charismatic theology. He provided only one paragraph from the sermon, but even from that one paragraph, it was obvious that the charismatic preacher did not mean revelations that would add to Scripture, but "revelations" that come to the readers of Scripture, of the doctrines of Scripture, from the words of Scripture. I marveled and thought, "This man is supposed to be an expert cult watcher, but all this preacher meant was that we need the illumination of the Spirit to receive what the Scripture teaches." And I knew this preacher. I knew he meant illumination, and that he himself condemned revelations that claimed to rival or add to Scripture. It was the Evangelical doctrine of the illumination of Scripture, only that the charismatic preacher stated it in different words -- in biblical words. Of course we can agree that there are no "new revelations" when the topic is the inspiration of Scripture, but that was not the topic, and the Scripture itself sometimes intends other things by the word.

This was one of the first times it occurred to me that Christian scholars who market themselves as valiant defenders of the faith are often nothing more than professional slanderers. Many Christian apologists are straight up frauds. Before this, I already knew that the scholars taught false doctrines because of their unbelief, but it was not so clear to me that they would misrepresent someone right to my face like this. For the next several decades, it would be confirmed to me over and over again that Christian theologians are usually not good at theology. As I studied more of their historic fiascoes, I was compelled to conclude that they are just not very bright. This is obscured by their convoluted prose and complex theories, but the truth is that they are often idiots who make up things, refuse to read simple statements, or refuse to believe what they read in the Bible. Any untrained reader of the Bible is in principle more likely to arrive at more accurate conclusions, and uneducated country preachers are often more in line with biblical terminologies than seminary professors. The problem is often not a matter of training, sophistication, knowledge of original languages, and such things. Just a little faith, or just a little reverence toward God, is usually all that is needed to arrive at a basically correct understanding, because the Bible simply tells you the truth. And this is why the scholars fail. They have no faith. They have no reverence. But this is not because they are scholars. Rather, it is because they are wicked people to begin with, and they think that their scholarship can replace faith and true conversion. Anti-intellectualism is always unfaithfulness toward God, but an intellectualism of unbelief is much worse than anti-intellectualism. It is so much worse that it is beyond comparison. Intellectualism can cause faith to mature into

invincible strength and life-giving knowledge, but it can cause unbelief to harden into arrogance and damnation.

Paul said that he prayed God would give the Ephesians "a spirit of wisdom and revelation," and that the eyes of their heart would be "enlightened." He did not mean that he wanted the Ephesians to write Scripture, but he wanted them to receive a spirit of "revelation" so that their hearts would be enlightened, or illuminated, to perceive the blessings that Christ had obtained for them, and to perceive that the power God used to raise him from the dead was working in them. This was what the Christian scholar lacked! And it was what he fought against, because the charismatic preacher was teaching about this very thing, that believers ought to receive a "revelation" of the blessings that we possess in Christ Jesus. This apologist, cult watcher, and defender of the faith did not have this spirit of revelation, and he could not perceive the benefits of redemption, so he attacked a preacher who urged people to receive this spirit of revelation, and to perceive the benefits of redemption. Like the "Christian" cult watchers often do today, he did the opposite of what he was supposed to do. Thus he was more like an apologist for Satan than for Christ. Paul told the Corinthians that he taught ideas from the Spirit with words from the Spirit, and this resulted in our Bible. But this apologist of the Christian faith, this defender of historic orthodoxy, attacked a man who taught ideas from the Bible with words from the Bible. His "Christian" ministry was the antithesis of the Bible's gospel ministry. He belonged to the cult of unbelief.

As Isaiah said, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." Paul said that those who refused to believe in Christ would read Moses, but their hearts were covered as they read. And he said, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing." You can read the Bible, read the Bible, read the Bible, and never grasp what it says. And if you refuse what it says, it will harden your heart even more every time you read it. You need the illumination of the Spirit, or to use the Bible's own word, you need a "revelation" of what you read in the Bible. Christian scholars can read Paul's letter to the Ephesians over and over again, study commentaries on Ephesians, write commentaries on Ephesians, preach from Ephesians, and still attack when they see other people use the same words that Paul used in the same sense that Paul used them. Jesus and his disciples faced foolish criticisms from the religious scholars of their day, and now we who have faith face similar criticisms in our day, especially from those who consider themselves guardians of the faith, but who vastly overestimate their own intelligence and authority.

The half-baked and half-faked theologians of so-called historic orthodoxy, once they formulated their doctrines with words they selected, will not allow those words to be used with different meanings. This practice is pervasive. Sometimes those words are used in the Bible, and they would not allow even the Bible to use those words with different meanings. Thus their theological heritage becomes a man-made tradition that overturns the word of God. The word "revelation" is one example. The Bible uses the word "revelation" in at least three senses. First, it refers to the inspiration of Scripture. We find this in 1 Peter 1.

We can agree that there are no new revelations when the context is clear that we refer to revelation in this sense, and only in this sense. Second, it refers to the illumination of the inner man concerning what has been revealed by inspiration. We find this in Ephesians 1. In this sense, of course there are "new revelations." You cannot even be saved without new revelations in this sense. Ironically, those who deny "new revelations" are probably correct about this concerning themselves -- they have never received a "revelation" of Jesus Christ and his benefits in redemption. They call themselves orthodox defenders of the faith, but they do this as outsiders of the faith! Third, it refers to the frequent exercise of the prophetic gifts when believers gather for worship or perform various ministries. We find this in 1 Corinthians 14. Paul said that "each one" can contribute to a church gathering, such as "a revelation." He did not mean that every person can add to Scripture. Those who pretend to protect the Bible from "new revelations" refuse to accept what the Bible says about revelations. Self-damning hypocrites. They are not protecting the Bible, but they are protecting their own theories and traditions against the Bible. We must restore the word "revelation" to our daily usage, in all the senses allowed by the Bible. If the no-faith "Christians" cringe, this is reason for us to use it even more, so that those who wish to follow the Bible may soon become accustomed to the legitimate uses of the word again. Let us embolden Christians to defy unbiblical traditions. Let us encourage Christians to completely trash phony piety and theological nonsense without any restraint or hesitation.

Sometimes I like to use this example because it happened to me and because it is a clear illustration of what religious people can become: One time I used the word "condition" in a discussion about faith, and some Calvinists seized on it as if I made a mistake or taught heresy. With them, the word can only mean "prerequisite," so that no one can use it except in a statement of denial, but I used it in a generic sense, as a normal English word. I had been clear that faith is an effect of God's saving grace, not a prerequisite for it. I teach predestination as the Bible teaches it, but I refuse to identify with the Calvinists and the Reformed. Their doctrine of predestination is weak, poorly formulated, and is not the same as how the Bible teaches it. I am not a moron either. I don't need to follow their stupid rules. I meant condition as in a "situation" or "state of affair," so that the word carries the meaning of "anything." In context, I was making an "even if" remark and said in effect, "Anything that is found in the Christian came from God in the first place." But they could not even understand something simple like this. Once they had used a word to specify a particular thing, they will not allow anyone to attach another meaning to it, even though my context made my meaning unmistakable. They were spiritually retarded. They had religious brain damage. They had constructed an elaborate stronghold of human tradition and then trapped themselves in it, and then they would shoot arrows at people from their tiny windows. What a bunch of historic morons.

To us, it is funny that a person from Brazil would demand a person from China to follow a creed from England. This is hilarious. We laugh at someone like this. He is a joke and a clown to us. He is someone that we make fun of at the dinner table when we tell stories about religious idiots. Talk to us from the word of God, and we will obey faster than you can say "Coram Deo." We will take action to follow what the Scripture says while you are still arguing and voting about it in your phony church councils, where nobody believes the Scripture anyway. But if you try to force an identification of one heritage of extra-biblical

development of theology with the progress of redemption within the Holy Scripture, then we will laugh in your face. You have so groveled on the dirt before a particular religious culture that you have been entirely blind to the global expansion of the gospel since the days of the apostles. As Jesus said, the gospel would reach "the ends of the earth." You are in the United States, or Brazil, or Singapore, or India, or Kenya -- you all have the Scriptures, and you bow down to England? Then you have the gall to paint us as the villains for not doing the same. Are you this stupid? You are "historic"? So are we. You have martyrs? We have more. Were the framers trusted men with mighty intellects? Still, we demand: Did they have any faith to obey what the Scriptures say, to prophesy, speak in tongues, heal the sick, and cast out demons? If not, then they should not be trusted and they had defective intellects. It is as simple as that. We are always suspicious and never impressed toward those who have no faith in the promises and commands of the Bible. And we have also refuted these men on some key doctrines and offered better formulations. The historic creeds and theologians committed errors that any literate non-Christian should be able to avoid simply by reading the Bible. And they committed these errors because they were determined to think along certain lines and to maintain certain biases regardless of what the Bible said. We can offer them due respect on those things that they taught correctly, but we will not honor them more than that. We certainly refuse to honor them for their unbelief, but we will rather harshly condemn them and shame them for it. And if these men were half as good as you say, they would have accepted our correction.

You keep repeating your traditions, but cannot defend them against us. So why don't you tell England to obey us? Why don't you study the Scriptures, and then teach England a thing or two? As the Bible says, "I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts." But no, you want the rest of the world to cower like you. Pathetic! You call a religious tradition the result of divine providence in order to justify your idolatry, but providence also produced other creeds, other traditions, in other periods, and in other places around the world, and some of what happened in these places could be better on certain topics. Providence also produced the orthodox Pharisees, who killed Jesus Christ. And since providence also produced people like you, do we need to say more? As the Bible says, some vessels are made for "dishonorable use." We do not interpret Scripture by history and providence, but we interpret history and providence by the Scripture. If something is "historic," but unscriptural, then it is just historically wrong. It is a historic blunder, a historic tragedy. All it means is that it has been wrong for a long time. Indeed, if two people are correct in their theology, then they will agree, but the common point would be Scripture, and not a creed from England. One may have never heard of Chalcedon or Westminster or some other historic creed, or he may not follow some other historic theologian, and still hold to the same doctrine, or if he follows Scripture closely, something more accurate, something better formulated, and something with stronger faith. If a creed is correct on some points, we can agree with those points for the sake of unity, order, and convenience. But if a creed is incorrect on some points, then to bow to it is insanity, not orthodoxy. In fact, it would be one evidence of counterfeit faith.

It is absurd that we should show loyalty to something because it is "historic." Historic or not, I will fiercely refuse to show loyalty to unbelief. I will not apologize for this, but you should apologize to me for trying to shame me into becoming a defeated and worthless

religious zombie like you. You have sinned greatly against God, against me, against all believers, and against all of mankind. Historic? You have sinned against all of history. In fact, you should fall on your face and thank me for rejecting you, because if I were to surrender to you, it would only increase your condemnation. You have sinned by placing a stumbling block before me as I walk in faith. Now I am one who would kick that stumbling block right back at you and smash your face with it. But not everyone has the ability and awareness to do this, and some people will fall because of you. Some people will fall into unbelief and sin because of you, and Jesus said that it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a boulder around your neck. You should rather die than to teach unbelief and tradition. You claim to care about the Bible, but if this is true, then you would go kill yourself. Wake up, you sinner! If a doctrine is "historic" but not biblical, then it is only historic heresy. How long will you allow it to continue? To remind everyone that it is "historic" makes it worse, not better. The more you bully someone with "historic" this or that, the more it shows that you are an evil and inept demon. But if a doctrine is biblical, then show that it is biblical, "so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

This is the policy for our partners in the gospel: Be liberated to be biblical. Refuse to let any theological tradition or heritage put a straitjacket on you when you speak for the gospel. Freely use words that are appropriate but that human orthodoxy has hijacked for its exclusive use. Disrupt the no-faith critics. Use words that are offensive to them. When they protest, shove them aside. They cannot do anything to you. Reintroduce the normal usage of words from the Bible and from your language to the population instead of restricting certain words with technical meanings. The Bible itself attaches different meanings to words and alternates back and forth, although it makes the meaning clear in each instance by the context. Follow this example. Freely attach legitimate meanings to the words that you use, but make the meaning clear in each instance by the context. If you do this, you do not need to explain and qualify each time you use a word that is different from how it is used by the disciples of tradition. It is their fault if they consider themselves knowledgeable but neglect how the Bible uses words and how your context defines the words. Then those who criticize you will betray their ignorance. Let their attack against us be a testimony against themselves.

This also applies to longer terms and phrases. Peter said to the people, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Of course Peter did not mean that we can redeem ourselves from sin or convert ourselves from unbelief, or that we do not need the Spirit of God to grant us repentance and produce faith in us. As Jesus said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." Yet the apostle considered it correct to speak this way -- "save yourselves" -- and so we should also speak this way. It is not an endorsement of the Arminian heresy. Some Calvinists think that because the Bible teaches predestination, we must not speak like this. They have jargonized the Bible itself out of their theology. Our doctrine of predestination is more extreme and consistent, like the Bible's own doctrine, so that even the Calvinists wish to restrain us. But we still speak this way -- "save yourselves" -- because the Bible speaks this way. If a Calvinist says that you cannot speak in such terms, then speak only in such terms right in his face. If he will

not save himself from this crooked tradition, at least we will free ourselves from it. And of course he cannot free himself, unless God gives him a "revelation"!

Paul said he prayed that "Christ may dwell in your heart through faith." So damn tradition to hell, and feel free to say, "Ask Jesus into your heart." James said, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." So feel free to say, "Prayer changes things. Prayer heals the sick. Prayer works miracles." Joshua said, "Choose life, so that you and your children may live." So feel free to say, "Choose life. Choose Jesus Christ. Accept him into your heart by faith." The traditionalists were trying to make certain points that they considered important, but they ended up condemning words, concepts, and phrases that the Bible itself uses. So they do not allow you to say, "Save yourselves," or "Accept Jesus Christ into your heart," or "Prayer changes things," or "Choose Jesus Christ" even though the Bible teaches all of these. Then they do not want you to say, "Jesus loves you" and "God has a wonderful plan for your life" even when the context makes it biblical to say these things (indeed, they are incorrect in some contexts), or you must follow some of them to invent "two wills" in God or "common grace" or some other insane nonsense. Like the Pharisees, they anointed themselves as the guardians of the faith, and regarded themselves as supreme experts of the word of God, but their total incompetence made even the worst heretics at times sound more orthodox and biblical. Literacy was wasted on them.

Your life is precious, if to no one else, at least it should be to you. Don't waste your life adoring a super stupid theologian or religious heritage. Don't waste your life defending a defective man-made creed when God has given you a perfect divine revelation. Don't throw away your life like this. Come on, not like this. You can use it like a tool when you wish, but where it is wrong, cast it aside like trash. Preach with the whole spectrum of biblical ideas and terms. Never allow people to shame you into avoiding words and phrases the way the Bible uses them. If they criticize you, disregard them and focus on teaching and serving those who would listen. If the situation calls for it, you can attack the critics in full force. They will probably not listen, but it will be a testimony against them on the day of judgment, that someone told them the truth and tried to correct them. It might also ignite confidence in those who wish to follow the word of God, but who have been harassed by man-made doctrines. There is no need to address critics excessively. Don't focus so much on the wolves that you forget the lambs. If you beat the wolves but starve the sheep, you would still be a bad shepherd.

Jargon can be convenient, but jargonized theology is not naturally better, especially when the terms of formulation (historic orthodoxy) overlap with the terms of revelation (biblical orthodoxy). Unless the formulation is identical in sense, in depth, and in breadth to the revelation, the terms will become restricted to express a smaller range of meanings and doctrines than their original usage, and then the formulation will condemn usage that is beyond itself even when it agrees with revelation. This is one way historic orthodoxy becomes heresy and replaces biblical orthodoxy, and then this historic heresy is upheld as if it is biblical orthodoxy. Thus jargonized theology is not necessarily more accurate or complete, but it is more technical, supposedly to address a concern that men may have in a specific instance, and men are often happy to make it technical in order to maintain their religious pride and unbelief. Their faith is weaker than the "common people" who read the

Bible, believe it, and obey it. In many cases, the difference is between heaven and hell. As Jesus said, people will come from the four corners of the earth to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the children of the kingdom will be cast out into darkness. You are on the church membership, on the church board, on the seminary board, on the denomination council, on the confession committee, on the translation committee, on the extraterrestrial evangelistic association, on the intergalactic theological society, and every formal religious institution known to men, and even those not known to men, but God throws you out like trash. Then a country boy who has never heard of Calvin except from the comics, because he has a little faith, comes and sits down with Christ.

The Pharisees considered themselves experts in the word of God, but Jesus said, "You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" Indeed, they were the ones who reformed the people of God at that time from idolatry and licentiousness to the law of God, but it was an outward reformation. As in the time of Jeremiah, they had abandoned the spring of living water, and had built for themselves cisterns that could hold no water. You can reform and reform and reform, but unless you reform into faith in the word of God instead of the tradition of men, unless you reform into miracles instead of rituals, and unless you reform into a revelation of truth instead of a mere restriction from error, you will reform yourself straight into hellfire. And if you forbid people from entering into what your tradition regards as falsehood, when it is the evident word of God, even the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, then you practically guarantee your damnation.

You claim to protect Scripture with your tradition, but the truth is that you replace Scripture with your tradition. Then you judge and attack others on the basis of your tradition, and not on the basis of Scripture. You do this in the name of Scripture, even when those you criticize are more in line with Scripture. When you are challenged on this, you answer with something about the importance of tradition. I want you to show me how you are even saved. It is futile to come against us with the historic scholars and creeds when we are correct and you are wrong. It will only destroy the scholars and the creeds along with you. As Jesus said, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Now even though we speak like this, you are unmoved and unafraid, because you have put on the whole armor of Satan, and your heart have been sealed with the breastplate of tradition. You hide in your demonic stronghold, and looking out from a tiny window, you see only what the devil allows you to see. You think you are a defender of heaven, but you are trapped in a fortress of hell. Call upon God in the name of Jesus Christ. Do it right now. He is the only one who can save you.

15. Letters on Epidemics

-- 1 --

A Christian should not intentionally expose himself to disease without a good purpose, for as it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." However, if he is exposed by accident, by necessity, or as part of daily life, then he can claim immunity by faith. I disagree that a Christian doctor or nurse should run the other way when an epidemic is coming his way. Indeed, to remain would mean a deliberate risk of exposure, but in this case there is a good purpose for it, and it would not be putting God to the test or abusing his protection. There might be legitimate reasons to leave the area, and a medical professional should obey orders from his superior or institution to withdraw, but I am addressing the notion that it is "wisdom" to escape as a first response. In fact, to flee would in principle make this Christian worse than an unbeliever, as if the unbeliever has more courage, and more faith in his humanity and in scientific procedures than the Christian has in his God. One could argue that this brings disgrace to the gospel. As a medical professional, it is your job to face this. A firefighter is expected to run into dangerous fires, not away from them. And a police officer is expected to confront violent criminals. Therefore, it is not evident that to avoid the situation follows from "wisdom."

As Christians, we are supposed to exhibit resolute intention and compassion in ministry, and with perfect immunity be able to touch people with highly contagious diseases, and even healing them by this touch. I do not say that a Christian must always make direct contact with disease even in the ministry of healing, but it is indeed possible to do so with immunity. There is no biblical principle that would call for you to retreat in fear, except for the principle that we should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, and that we should act in proportion to our faith. Thus it might be better to retreat if there is a lack of faith, if there is such abject terror. If you are unprepared in your faith, then admit it, and escape so that you can fight another day. If you are so worried that you must leave, then that is your decision. But if this happens, do not remain complacent. Hate the fear, and do something about it. Never excuse yourself by calling something wisdom when it is mere unbelief. If you confess your lack of faith, then there is no room for condemnation, but only for forgiveness and improvement. But if you excuse your lack of faith, then your heart will condemn you, and you will not become stronger.

Have you been pounding biblical healing into yourself daily, over and over again? When symptoms of sickness appear, do you routinely command them to leave, and they obey? Do you always think in terms of redemption and miracles? Or do you accept scientific theories as the truth and the standard when it comes to health and healing? It is your responsibility to study and believe what the Bible says about healing. And it is the responsibility of your church to encourage faith in healing, to teach it, to obey it, and to demonstrate it. If your church does not do this, then what are you doing there? Why are you there? Now the Bible says that if you will delight in the word of God and think about it day and night, then whatever you do will prosper. If you want success in healing, then

think about the word of God on healing day and night. Think it. Say it. Pray it. Teach it. Do it.

This is a good reminder that we should devote much more attention to healing. If we are sick or if we die, everything else is futile. We have to stay alive and well to function as useful Christians in this world. The claim that sickness can make us better believers or bring more glory to God is a lie from hell, a lie that Jesus contradicted in both word and deed. Anyone who teaches this false doctrine is a prophet of the devil. Science obviously cannot solve every sickness. In fact, it cannot truly solve any sickness. Some sicknesses are less severe than others, but it is not that science can stop them. People can say that science can save them, but when this Ebola epidemic is at their door...well, we see how this is going. We cannot count on it. If it is not Ebola, it might be something else. Even the flu can kill a bunch of people, including seemingly strong and healthy people. Both ordinary and strange diseases will continue to appear. We cannot be complacent. We have a refuge in God, and the power to push back diseases, literally with our bare hands, for he said, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." But now Christians call sickness a gift from God, while vile sinners work with their feeble science to keep people alive. How far the church has fallen!

You must decide for yourself, because you will have to bear the consequences. But if you run, you should not call it wisdom, but call it fear. If you are honest, it will benefit your faith and health in the long run, because if you see it for what it is, you might do something about it. There are also other considerations. For example, if the hospital procedures are very defective, you may factor that into your decision. I do not intend any condemnation in this reply, although if you excuse yourself, your heart will condemn you. I see the need for greater emphasis on healing for everyone, and this Ebola situation is another reminder. This could be an opportunity to demonstrate God's reality, power, and compassion. Wisdom does not call us to retreat, but it calls for constant fortification of our faith on healing. When wisdom tells us to run, it is probably because we have been living in neglect and unbelief.

-- 2 --

I am thankful that you accepted what I said. Again, I had no condemnation in mind, for you must bear the consequences of your decision. But it appears all of you were aligned with this kind of thinking, or wanted to, and I merely put ideas into words, and stirred up the faith that was already there. I am reminded that healing is not only a doctrine for fun, for excitement, for emotionalism, for worldly comfort, for sectarianism, for debate, for charismatics, or anything like that. The "Christian" cynics often try to portray the doctrine this way, but to the person who is sick with cancer, or dementia, or even something like a broken leg or food poisoning, the doctrine is not about any of these things. When critics disparage the interest in biblical healing, they trivialize both divine compassion and human suffering. To make themselves look good, and to put down those who have more faith, they make God's promises and people's problems into less than what they really are. They make a mockery of the blood of Christ and the suffering of men. Far worse than murderers and

idolaters, or thieves and prostitutes, they are some of the most wicked people in human history. The fact that they present themselves as leaders of the church and defenders of the faith make them even more corrupt.

Healing is a doctrine of redemption -- "himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses," and "he went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil." The rejection of spiritual gifts is a diversion. This has nothing directly to do with spiritual "gifts" -- a term very rarely used in the New Testament in relation to miracles of healing, prophecy, and other things, and if we take the whole Bible into consideration, the term is almost never used to refer to miracles. Even if all spiritual gifts have passed away, or even if God has never given men spiritual gifts, redemption has not passed away. The real issue has never been a cessation of spiritual gifts, but a cessation of faith. The critics then try to place the responsibility on God by talking about spiritual gifts, and to draw attention away from their own unbelief by complaining about fanaticism. But any attack on healing is an attack on redemption, on the gospel itself. It is another gospel, a heresy, a doctrine of demons. It is stepping on the blood of Christ as if it is a common and ineffectual thing.

That said, the spiritual gifts themselves come from redemption, because the Holy Spirit himself comes to us on the basis of redemption, and the Bible relates miracle power to faith in the word of God and to action from the Spirit, not directly to spiritual gifts. We have supernatural abilities by the Spirit because of redemption. Redemption will never pass away, and Jesus said the Spirit will abide with us forever. It does not matter who we are or when we live. Paul reminded the Galatians that God worked miracles among the people because they believed the gospel. (He did not say that they believed the gospel because God worked miracles.) We condemn the ultra-dispensationalism of the critics. If healing ceases, it would be because sickness has passed away. There will be a cessation of sickness before a cessation of healing.

Healing by supernatural power is integral to God's mercy to save the whole man. It is practical. It is important. It is the gospel. It is not a pet doctrine. It is not a self-centered teaching or a private obsession. It is just as God-centered and Christ-centered as the forgiveness of sins. It draws attention to God's power and kindness, and to Christ's sacrifice and suffering. Even for those of us who believe God's word, we have not been pushing healing enough on all available channels. We have not preached it and ministered it as Jesus did, or as the apostles did. And the harshest opponents do not come from civil authorities or false religions, but from the church, from those who call themselves Christians. The Bible's teaching on faith and healing have benefited me greatly through the years, because not only is healing itself valuable, but the kind of thinking that comes with it is applied to other areas of life. For example, it so concretely emphasizes that we are to trust God's word rather than feelings and circumstances, and we must think and talk in line with God's word. Some people claim to be expert defenders of orthodoxy, but they resist this thing that we have learned since we were little children, that we walk by the word of God, and not by what we see and what we feel. Always regard such men with contempt.

You might never come into contact with this epidemic, but let us take it seriously. Let us take the idea of it, and any fear of it, seriously. The virus might never come to you, but the

fear is already here. This itself is a disease. In any case, we cannot face a virus only with willpower, which might be presumption that leads to disaster, but we must face it with spiritual knowledge and strength. By faith we take refuge in the suffering of Christ and become immune to diseases. We shall fortify ourselves in the word of God, and bring healing to those who are afflicted. If you have never discussed healing with your partners, going into the redemptive basis of healing, into faith for healing, into the ways of receiving and ministering healing, laying on of hands, the name of Jesus, and such things, now is the time to do it. If you have done it before, now is the time to review it. Even when this epidemic has passed, something else might come up. But it will be no problem, because you will be ready. It would be a good idea to go through some Bible passages on healing, and also read some testimonies about it. I remember that you have also ministered healing to people and witnessed God healing them by miracles. You should relate some of these experiences to illustrate the teaching and to encourage faith in the word of God.

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The Bible sees sickness as a work of the devil. We must receive a revelation of this. Let us receive the revelation that sickness is an attack from Satan, and not a gift from God. This will set us free to fight it with our faith. Then we will not embrace sickness when we pray, but we will destroy sickness when we pray. Then instead of resigning ourselves to it, we will rise up and curse the disease in the name of Jesus. We will resist sickness and overcome it just like we resist sin and overcome it, because the same God who "forgives all your sins" is the same one who "heals all your diseases."

We must never test God out of presumption, but to doubt God is even worse than to test God. When we walk in presumption, we have an exaggerated perception of ourselves, but when we doubt God, we have a blasphemous perception of God. Therefore, it is proper to examine ourselves, so that we would walk in faith and not presumption, but never listen to those who complain about presumption just so they can talk you out of faith. Their error is far worse than presumption, because they have rejected the nature of God and twisted his word in order to maintain a show of piety. They obscure the benefits of redemption so that they can preserve respect from men, and as Jesus said, that is all they will ever have – respect from mere men. In some cases, they do not even have salvation from God.

Because healing belongs to redemption, it is necessary to reclassify creeds, councils, churches, and scholars that do not forcefully teach it, or even fight against it. Any view that does not teach healing in the gospel is anti-Christian and heretical. There is really no reason for someone who opposes healing to remain in our institutions. Just as there is no place for someone who denies the atonement for sin, there is no place for someone who denies that "himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses." So what if you think he is brilliant on this or that topic? If he rejects healing – if he rejects the gospel – then he is not brilliant.

We have options. We are not impoverished. There are teachers who believe and teach all of the gospel, or since the gospel is one, we should just say "the gospel." Why do we need those who teach some of it and condemn some of it? Or again, since the gospel is one, we

should say that if we have teachers who teach the gospel, why do we need those who teach against it? "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so." There is no need to settle for a no-faith theologian. To tolerate someone like this would make us complicit in his unbelief.

The church should be prepared to confront a new sickness or epidemic even before medical science knows what to do with it. But the greatest epidemic is the theology of unbelief. As it is written, "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?" The correct approach is eradication. Total extermination.

16. "Our critics always pay a price..."

As partners in the gospel of Jesus Christ, let us remain confident in what we have learned, knowing how we have learned the truth from the scriptures since the beginning of our faith when we were still children. We are also witnesses to the effects of the doctrines of Christ, and we continue to live in his power day by day. Our opponents consist of both Christians and non-Christians, and indeed many who call themselves Christians are worse than the non-Christians. It was also this way when Jesus walked the earth. We should welcome correction from intelligent people, but to this point we have been disappointed. Their disagreements come from a failure to think through simple issues, and from their unbelief toward the word of God. By now, they should know that we have considered every detail of our own position, and we are impervious to their attacks. Even if they refuse to admit this, we know this to be true, and that we have tested our doctrines against scriptures and arguments under much greater pressure than they could ever muster.

When they challenge what is true, it betrays the fact that they believe what is false, so that it backfires against them. Therefore, our critics always pay a price when they attack us on things that pertain to religion. When they choose to engage in high stakes controversy with us, the entry fee is their very souls. We take our faith very seriously. It is more than a hobby. We do not affirm our doctrines just so we will have something to debate and to kill time. We do not like to argue, and when we do, we do not play games. Thus when we are challenged, we shall always hold our critics accountable. There are no freebies. If they lose, they leave their salvation on the table.

This is due to the nature of the issues they choose to discuss. When they attack the word of God, they commit spiritual suicide. It is out of our hands. We do not name the price, but we can only make them aware of it. If we are right, and they are wrong, and they choose to attack us on issues that could backfire against their salvation, then when they do attack us on these things, this is the price that they pay. It is as simple as that. They cannot attack us and walk away unscathed, because they publicly testify against the truth, and each time they corrupt their souls more and more. They will always pay a price. Even if we do not charge them directly, God will hold them accountable. They will always receive in themselves the effects of their false doctrines. Their malice and unbelief corrupt their spirits and corrode their bodies.

So I say again -- remain steadfast and unmovable in your faith, and in the things that you have learned from the sacred scriptures. Preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Uphold those who love the truth but who are weak. Do not harm. Do not scheme. Mind your own business in the work of the gospel. Pursue your own program from God. You do not always need to react to what someone else says or does -- remain with your agenda, and do not be derailed. Define your mission. Then focus on your mission. Devote your time and effort on things that are consistent with it. Satan might attempt to use criticisms to manipulate you through your pride. If he can control your focus, then he can control your life. Although you would feel like you are defending the truth, you would keep doing things that are other than what your mission dictates. So he defeats you by giving you an illusion of productive

ministry. There is also the matter of diminishing returns. That is, the fifth time you respond to something is worth less than the first four times, especially when there are permanent records of these previous four times. Once the marginal benefit becomes too low, then do not waste your time on it. Just forget about it and move forward.

Nevertheless, when you are the one who is correct, and when it suits your mission to address a criticism, then offer no compromise as you do it. Let the critics know that they risk everything when they move against the gospel of Christ. They put everything on the line, even their salvation. If they wish to take a little from us, we will take everything from them, and disqualify them entirely. They will always lose much more than they wish to take. If they wish to take even one thing that Christ has secured for us, then we will take their whole redemption from them based on their own testimony about the word of God. For they are the ones who regard the blood of God as some unholy thing, and forfeit their place in him. We will not lift a finger to harm them. We will only testify against them, and God will enforce his word. He will multiply their punishments as they continue to harden their hearts.

As we have always lived differently by faith in Christ, so continue to live according to the word of God, and not the tradition of men. Follow the path written out for you according to the scriptures. Pay no attention to the rules of men in how they conduct discussions and resolve controversies. When they cause a situation that fall in line with your agenda, then exploit them for the gospel. As it is written, "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" Otherwise, regard them as rubbish, as the worthless people that they are. Possess a clear vision for the gospel, then move forward. Have no fear, and no regard for mere men. And the God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet.

From: Letters

17. Platitudes as Orthodoxy

Today, foolish platitudes are counted as sound doctrines, and the Bible's own teachings and commands are often portrayed as errors and heresies. The Bible says that faith is dead without action that is consistent with this faith. For example, if you see someone who is hungry, and you have something to give him, then you should not only say to him, "May you be warm and full." This is an empty platitude, not faith. Put your faith into action and give him something. Of course, we can make a declaration of faith for a suffering person that effects a miracle for him. If this is what we do, and if it is effective, then this would be putting our faith into action. But we are against pious statements that offer false comfort, that are void of faith, that cannot relieve suffering, and that are unbiblical in the first place.

Sometimes statements from the Bible are twisted around and used as religious platitudes to offer false encouragement. A tragedy happens to someone, and a Christian says, "God works out all things for the good of those who love him, and who are called according to his purpose." Right, but what is "good"? We should let the Bible define it, instead of calling something good just because it has happened. Perhaps what has happened is very, very bad, and the good is going to be when God overcomes it by his power. Something very, very bad happened to Joseph, but God arranged everything to catapult him to the top position of the mightiest nation of that day, where he gained unparalleled fame, power, and prosperity, and also saved many lives. Evidently, God thought that was good. Something very, very bad happened to Job, but God arranged everything to overturn his troubles, to double his wealth, heal his body, and ensure his long life. God thought that was good.

Is this what people mean when they say that God works all things for our good? No, they usually refer to only spiritual salvation and ethical development. Of course these things are good, very good. However, if someone does not believe in God's promises about healing and prosperity, about faith and miracles, and many other things in the Bible, does he really have salvation? And is he really developing ethically? Someone who refuses to have faith in God's very words is wicked by definition. Ethically, he is getting worse and worse. We hope that he is saved and is merely ignorant of what the Bible teaches, but if this is the case, then he should accept God's promises when we talk to him about them, for as Jesus said, "my sheep will hear my voice." The Bible indeed says that all things work together for good, but only "for those who love God" and "for those who are called according to his purpose." But if someone refuses to accept the word of God, then we have no basis to say that he is someone who loves God or someone who is called according to his purpose. So what has happened to him is just exactly what it appears to be -- something very bad, and something that will not lead to any good. When a Christian says "all things work for good" as a mere religious platitude, it is no different than when a non-Christian says, "all things happen for a reason." But even damnation is a reason.

On the other hand, if we truly love God, and if we are indeed called according to his purpose, then let us define good as the Bible defines it, and then let us insist on obtaining this good result when we face attacks and hurdles in life. We refuse to twist the word of God to excuse our weakness and failure, but we will become strong by the word of God.

We refuse to lie to ourselves and call something good when it is obviously very bad. If something is bad, it is bad, but God will destroy the bad things that come against us, and he will compel all things, even bad things, to become stepping stones to have us believe his good promises and to obtain the good results. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, and we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

There are those who call themselves Christians, but with itching ears, they gather to themselves false teachers who tell them what they want to hear, such as telling them that the bad things that happen to them are not due to their sin and unbelief, but due to God's sovereignty and arrangement for their benefit. The benefit is somehow always spiritual and ethical only, but still we do not see these people of weak faith receive it. They are still unspiritual and unethical. They are still full of unbelief, following the traditions of men rather than the commands of God. The word of God is twisted this way so that the people would receive false comfort, so that other than maintaining their endurance, they would not need to change anything about their beliefs or improve anything about themselves.

If someone who has a sickness comes to you, do not just say, "May God comfort you" or "May God teach you patience." Do not say, "Think about what you can learn from this." This is a useless platitude. This is not what the Bible says to do with sickness. But you should say, "Think about how you can get rid of it." Jesus said, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will have it." Many people have received healing in this manner. The Bible also says that the sick person can call for prayer, and the faith-prayer will work, not to bring some vague feeling of comfort, but it will bring a physical miracle. One can pray for himself, or ask someone else to pray for him, in order to blast the accursed thing out of his body. This is what the Bible says to do with sickness. Faith will end the sickness and restore full health. The Lord himself will answer. He will heal the person and raise him up! It is useless to tell the person that God works all things for his good, unless by good you mean a miracle healing and complete recovery. Forget religious platitudes. Tell the person what the Bible says. Teach him how to receive healing by faith. And then the two of you should put action to your faith. Lay your hands on him in the name of Jesus. Demand the sickness to wither by the roots and disappear. Command healing to take place.

Platitudes must never be confused with orthodoxy and humility. They are just excuses that people make for themselves, and even excuses that they make for God. Of course, God does not need us to make excuses for him, because he has done nothing wrong, but people's conception of God is wrong, and therefore they must make excuses for him when the false God in their orthodoxy does not measure up to the true God in the Bible. They are not defending the God of the Bible against people's misconceptions, but they are defending the God of their misconceptions against the God of the Bible. They also wish to excuse themselves. This is because they do not receive the results that the Bible promises due to their unbelief, but they do not wish to admit this, so that they would rather preach a different gospel than to humble themselves and improve themselves. The result is that they harden their hearts against God, and they make a mockery of people's suffering. They convince people to allow their problems to continue, to even embrace and defend the problems, although the Bible describes them as curses and offers weapons against them. The Bible

teaches the good news, but religious liars replace this with their bad news, and compel people to accept that instead.

The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, for they will appear as foolishness to him. This is not because the things of the Spirit are indeed foolishness, but because the natural man is so far from touching even the bottom of divine intelligence that the things of the Spirit would appear outside of what this man regards as the realm of intelligibility. Thus spiritual things are as gibberish to the natural, stupid man, much like human language is unintelligible to a slug. As it is written, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." A disciple of unbelief, such as a cessationist or a traditionalist, cannot receive the things of the Spirit because he is a mere natural man, still possessed by "the spirit of the world." He refuses to accept the benefits of the gospel and regards them as unspiritual, as unworthy of his lofty religious ideals and pretensions, or his historic creeds and theories, even though the Bible directly, explicitly, and repeatedly promises these things to those who have faith in God. This is not an evidence of greater faithfulness or scholarship, as he would like you to think, but it is an evidence that he has never made even an initial contact with the things of the Spirit. Even if this does not compel us to form certain conclusions about his salvation -- but tell me, why shouldn't it? -- we have no authority to defy God and say that such a man qualifies for any form of ministry.

On the other hand, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us." If we have the Spirit of God, then we will receive what God says about the benefits of the gospel. If we refuse to accept what God says, then we have another spirit, and not the Spirit of God. It is as simple as that, and the point is undeniable. Now those who are of unbelief are so wrong and so far from the truth that when we point out the simple truth about them, it would sound so outrageous to them that they would tend to reject it, and then attack us for it. However, it is irrelevant what they say to us or what they say about us. They are the least of our obstacles, because to say better things about them, we will have to overcome the Almighty and his Scripture. Attack me all you want, but who am I to fight against God? My preference is irrelevant. Seeing what the Bible teaches about the benefits of the gospel and about those who accept or reject them, the truth is that I have no authority and no permission to say better things about these people. I would be happy to get out of the way completely, so that they would not need to criticize me at all, but then the Bible still says what it says. If they wish to show that they have the Spirit of God, then they only need to show that they accept what the Bible says about the things that God has freely given to us, including healing, prosperity, visions and dreams, prophecy, and all kinds of signs and wonders. This is so simple, and so easy to do when a person has the Spirit of God. It is so easy for us to accept all these things. Because we have been born of the Spirit and filled with the Spirit, this is our realm, the realm of the Spirit.

People who refuse the benefits of the gospel are not more spiritual or mature, but they are inferior human beings altogether. Some of them refuse because of ignorance, and they will quickly accept the truth when we show it to them. But some of them refuse because they are unsaved, natural people. They refuse to hear the voice of the Shepherd because they are

not his sheep. Again, if you speak this way, you might be criticized. But what does it matter? It doesn't change anything, and they are only hurting themselves when they remain stubborn against the truth. As for us, we will keep speaking about all the benefits of the gospel to both the church and the world, even when these benefits are even more unpopular in the church than in the world. There are those in the world who want God to help them, and they are bitter against God because the church has told them that he would not help, and that they are sinful and man-centered for even wishing that he would. This is not only a different gospel, but this is not even the same God as the one in the Bible.

God wants to save us, heal us, prosper us, guide us, love us, teach us, protect us, mature us, and yes, he also wants us to serve him. It is such a simplistic and stupid theology to think that a God-centered life is about working and suffering, and rejecting even the comfort that comes from God. It is the most satanic and man-centered religion to tell God that we will have a God-centered religion on our terms! How grotesque is this? True religion is God-centered, and this means to revere God as the reference point for all things. This might or might not mean suffering, but we will need to look at his word to find out, instead of assuming that it is all about suffering. But when we take God as our reference point in the matter of health, what do we see? We see that Jesus took our infirmities and bore our sickness. We see that God himself said that sickness is satanic bondage and oppression, and we see that Jesus was obsessed with healing people. We see that a God-centered theology, therefore, must have a strongest message of miracle healing. It is God-centered to have faith for man's physical health and comfort, because this is God's own perspective on the matter. If it comes from faith, it is God-centered. But if it comes from tradition, unbelief, and a self-centered piety, then even if one offers his body to be burned, he is nothing. He is a martyr only in the eyes of men, but utterly worthless in the eyes of God. Suffering is stupid, worthless, selfish, and self-centered, unless it is a suffering that is according to the word of God. But so much suffering is against the word of God.

One Christian author wrote, "Don't waste your cancer." What a demonic message. This is counter-gospel. This is fake religion. The Bible never calls sickness a gift from God, but it says that sickness is satanic bondage and oppression. Sickness is a demonic attack, not a divine gift. Jesus devoted an inordinate amount of effort to obliterate it everywhere he went. Would that author accuse Jesus of wasting everyone's sickness? Behold the demeaning effect of unbelief. This fake teacher calls upon thousands of people to waste the blood of Christ, who took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses to obtain healing for us. Unless you "waste" your sickness, you waste your redemption. Behold the perverse theology of tradition. This fake teacher romanticizes sickness and suffering, and urges thousands of God's people to embrace bondage and oppression, surrendering to Satan to do all his will. Because he weakens people's faith and urgency in receiving healing from God, the author has become directly responsible for their suffering and even deaths. He is a sadist and a murderer. But spiritual poison like this is usually presented as profound piety and scholarship.

Jesus never said, "Don't waste your sickness," but he said, "Do you want to be healed?" And then he said to the invalid, "Pick up your mat and walk." He never said, "Let the will of God be done," but he said, "What do you want me to do for you?" And then he said to

the blind man, "Your faith has healed you." He never said – he never even hinted it once - - "God will heal you, if it is his will," but he said, "According to your faith will it be done to you." In other words, "What you believe will happen, is what will happen. What you believe God will do, is what God will do." What did the apostles say? They said, "Jesus Christ heals you," "In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk," and "The prayer of faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will raise him up." So never say to someone, "Don't waste your cancer," but say, "Don't keep your cancer."

Jesus never said, "God has a noble purpose in your suffering." He said that we cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time, but he said that the Father knows that we need these things and that if we will seek God first, then Mammon -- money, food, clothing, etc. -- will be added to us. He said that this is a matter of faith, and that worry comes from unbelief. In other words, Jesus' teaching is that, have faith, and he will end your sickness, poverty, and suffering. Nowadays this is called heresy, but Jesus taught exactly this. People want the Bible to say, "It will be done to you according to the will of God," so that they can offload all spiritual responsibility. No matter what happens, it is not their fault. But the Bible does not say what they want. The Bible keeps saying, "It will be done to you according to your faith." Why don't they save the suffering for persecution and martyrdom? But no, they wish to replace suffering for the gospel with suffering for their own unbelief. They wish to cast the narrative that they are epic spiritual heroes – just for being failures. The Bible's narrative is that they are worthless no-faith losers.

They say that things like healing and prosperity are not important, especially relative to the spiritual life, but then they pursue these things by their own wit and strength. They are religious hypocrites. They live a double life. Jesus said that our life does not consist of the abundance of possessions, but in both recorded instances where he multiplied food, he made so much that there were many baskets left over. He warned against covetousness, but he still taught that the possession of material things are related to faith, that God knows we need them, and that these things will be added to us when we seek God first. Jesus said that material things do not define us, and he said that the heathens chase after these things. But he still taught that if we have faith, we will not need to worry about money, if we have faith, we will get food, and if we have faith, we will get clothes. In other words, Jesus placed material things as items that are received by faith along with spiritual things, but he prioritized them according to their importance. Contrary to Jesus, the no-faith people place the reception of spiritual things under faith, but the reception of material things outside faith, and under human effort. The gospel places the attainment of material things under faith by the explicit teachings of Jesus himself; therefore, to teach anything different is to teach a different gospel, a non-Christian religion. The resulting view on health, wealth, and material things attempts to pass itself off as Christianity, but it is far more similar to Buddhism or one of the eastern or mystical religions.

Offer people real faith, real gospel words and actions, and not religious platitudes. To those who follow Christ with unworthy motives, we say, count the cost. You might face troubles because of your faith in Christ. These troubles will come from men, likely religious men who pretend to uphold orthodoxy. God is not the one who troubles you, for as it is written, "If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing." He will save you from these troubles.

To those who are suffering, we say, have faith in God. If you come to Jesus Christ by faith, he will save you, heal you, prosper you, and establish you, so that you can go forth and be effective witnesses for him. Do not play the victim and make pious excuses. God can give you the victory. This will not just be a moral victory, but it will be a victory in every sense.

God had promised Israel the land, and that they would win when they fought against the inhabitants. So when Joshua lost a battle, he did not say, "Well, I guess all things work for the good to those who love God." He did not say, "Perhaps the gift of winning has ceased after Moses died." He did not say, "This will help us develop humility and patience." He did not say, "People, don't waste this bloodbath! Let us get slaughtered for the glory of God." No, he knew that he lost because something went wrong -- very, very wrong. He refused to accept it. He confronted God as if something went wrong. He did not embrace what happened as "the will of God." And God told him that someone in his camp had sinned. Aha! What did Joshua do? He dragged out those who sinned and led the people to stone them to death and burn their bodies! After that, Joshua went right back into battle and won -- not just the moral victory, but also the military victory, because this was what God promised. Joshua knew that when God promises something and it does not happen, it is not because it is "the will of God," but it is because something has gone terribly wrong. He refused to make excuses. He dragged out the problem, killed it, and burned it. He was not satisfied until he obtained exactly what God said.

But what do you do to those among you who preach unbelief, who teach the traditions of men rather than the promises of God? You call them doctors and reverends, and you hear their sermons and buy their books, and you place them on your boards and committees to control your resources, and you write their words into your creeds and policies to control your doctrines, when you ought to exterminate them from the church and destroy their materials. This is why you do not receive the promises of God. It is not because this is "the will of God." It is not because "all things work for the good." It is not because anything from God has ceased. You do not receive the promises of God because of your unbelief and disobedience. And if you keep making excuses, things will keep getting worse and worse for you. I will tell you exactly what you must do. Take out "Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had" -- yes, even his donkeys and sheep, and all the things associated with him -- then kill them and burn them.

Now here is the gospel, the good news. When sickness attacks you, God will not just give you a moral victory so that you will endure it with a smile and then die. If you have faith, he will not allow Satan to take away your dignity. As it is written, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." No doubt God will give you that moral victory, and you will laugh at the devil even when he attacks you. But then God will also give you the material victory, and by faith in the name of Jesus you will smite the disease and uproot the thing from your body, and you will walk in life and health for the glory of God. When poverty attacks you, you will not only say, "God makes me rich in faith." Indeed you will be rich in faith, and because you are so rich in faith, you will also believe Jesus when he said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The gospel is good news, the good news of the power of God to save you

in every sense. Anyone who denies this preaches a different gospel and a pagan religion, and the Bible says, let him be accursed.

18. Predestination and Miracles

Jesus said to his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). The Bible teaches a doctrine of election, or predestination. Before we became Christians, we were sinners, wicked to the core, so that in ourselves it was impossible for us to turn toward righteousness. It was impossible for us to choose any spiritual good. If we were to turn from evil to good, some other force outside of ourselves would have had to change us. When we accepted the gospel and decided to follow Christ, it was because God had first chosen us before the creation of the world. If you think that you indeed made a choice to follow Christ, you are correct, but your choice was an effect of God's prior choice. God's acceptance of you was not an effect of your choice, but your acceptance of Christ was an effect of God's choice, a choice that happened long before you were created. As John said, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." And then he added, "We love because he first loved us." Of course we love God, or we would still be unsaved, but we love him because he first loved us and saved us. This is the doctrine of election.

This is not the end of it. Predestination is for more than bare salvation, or to say it more correctly, salvation involves more than the mere forgiveness of sins and the promise of heaven. Salvation in Christ is a whole package of blessings and responsibilities. I do not mean that you need to achieve these blessings and responsibilities in order to attain salvation. No, I mean that when you receive salvation, these blessings and responsibilities also come with it. Thus it is not that you need to reach heaven in order to be saved, but that because you are saved by faith in Christ, you will reach heaven. And if you do not reach heaven when you die but fall straight into hell, it means that you have never been saved. This is simple, but it is important to keep it in mind, because people tend to stop thinking this way once they approach topics that they are biased against.

God has chosen us, and predestined us. Predestined for what? There was more to what Jesus said: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." God predestined us to bear fruit. What is this fruit? Christian teaching often assumes that fruit refers to spiritual and ethical effects such as improvements in character, works of charity, and also works of ministry, such as saving sinners and building churches. This is not entirely wrong, but the biblical idea of fruit includes much more, and Jesus clearly had other things in mind when he made the statement.

Even in the same verse, we can see that Jesus had in mind not only works of preaching and charity, because he said his followers would produce fruit and that "the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." Gospel life and ministry is characterized by answers to prayers. What kinds of prayers? Wait, this is weaker than the way Jesus said it. The doctrine of prayer in historic unbelief is that "God will answer your prayers if it is his will (regardless of what he promised). Or, you can say that he always answers your prayers -- sometimes he says yes, sometimes no, sometimes maybe, sometimes later. Or, when you ask for egg, he will give you a scorpion, so that when you ask for spiritual growth, he will

give you cancer to teach you a lesson." Among us, we have never accepted this view of prayer. We recognize it as satanic deception. But Jesus did not even say, "God will answer your prayers" or "God will always answer your prayers." He said, "God will give you whatever you ask." This is how God wants us to think about our relationship with him. This is how he wants us to think about discipleship. This is how he wants us to think about faith and prayer. God will give me whatever I ask when I approach him in the name of Jesus. No hiding behind a thousand qualifications. No excuses for me or for him.

God will give me whatever I ask. I will have whatever I ask. What I ask, I get. And I am predestined for this. So I am chosen to get whatever I ask. I am predestined to get whatever I ask. It is my foreordained destiny to receive whatever I ask God in the name of Jesus. If you have never heard this, then you have never heard the Bible's doctrine of predestination, you have never heard the Bible's doctrine of prayer, you have never heard the Bible's doctrine of the name of Jesus, and you have never heard the Bible's doctrine of discipleship. Just several verses earlier, Jesus said, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (15:7-8). Getting whatever we ask from God is intertwined throughout his discourse with the notions of bearing fruit, being his disciples, and loving one another. Thus getting whatever we ask from God is as pervasive as the gospel itself. It cannot be taken out and thrown away without tearing apart the entire gospel, and thus also our salvation. Here bearing fruit is almost the same thing as getting whatever we ask from God, and by getting what we ask from God, we show ourselves to be true disciples of Christ.

Tradition teaches that we show ourselves to be disciples when we demonstrate how well we put up with God when he does not answer our prayers. Historic unbelief suggests that we show ourselves to be disciples when we keep our word of allegiance to him more than he keeps his word of blessing to us! That is supposed to be good fruit. That is supposed to be true discipleship. But Jesus said that we show ourselves to be his true disciples when we abide in him, have his words abide in us, and then ask for whatever we wish, and receive whatever we ask from God. Look, are we disciples or not? If we are disciples, then we should let the master define what it means to be disciples. People say that we show that we are disciples by remaining faithful when we do not get what we want from God – when he disappoints us and appears to break his promises. But Jesus said that we show that we are disciples by asking for what we want and getting what we want. Decide. Accept what Jesus said and be a Christian, or reject what Jesus said and walk out the door. Get out! And stop calling yourself a Christian.

I speak to outsiders, of course, because this doctrine from Jesus has always been accepted among us, that we can have what we want from God by faith. The outsiders always say, "But what about the abuse?" What abuse? Did Jesus say anything about abuse? Or are you more orthodox than he was, or smarter than he was, so that you know something that he did not know? If you claim to be his disciple, then shut your mouth and obey your master. In any case, we should attempt feats of faith so extreme and outrageous that they venture even beyond "whatever" before we begin to think about abuse. Right now any talk about

"abuse" is only an excuse to not even start at all, to not believe even a little of what Jesus said.

Still, what kinds of prayers did Jesus have in mind? Or what did he want his disciples to ask God to do for them? He said, "God will give you whatever you ask." What was the "whatever" he was thinking of? Of course "whatever" could include more than what he had in mind, but if he had something specific in mind, then we must know about it and invest everything into it first. And in fact, the context makes it very clear what he was talking about.

Earlier in the discourse, Jesus said, "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (14:10-11). The word is translated "works" in some versions, and the version we use offers the correct meaning as "miracles." We know that the "works" cannot refer to his preaching, because he just said, "The words I say to you...believe me when I say...or else believe because of the works." That is, he said, "I want you to believe my words, but if not, at least believe my works." He made a distinction between his words and his works. If you do not believe because of this thing, then believe because of the other thing. So by his works, he did not mean his words, or his ministry of preaching, but his ministry of miracles. Later in the discourse, Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken to them..." (15:22), referring to his sermons, and then he said, "If I had not done among them what no one else did..." (15:24), referring to his miracles. He again made a distinction between his ministry of preaching and his ministry of miracles. It is not a matter of emphasis, but in this context, his "works" refer only to his miracles, and exclude his ministry in doctrine and charity.

He continued, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (14:12-14). Again, he did not include actions or events related to his words, such as preaching. And he did not include actions or events related to charity, because he added that these works refer to things that the disciples would "ask" to happen, and that they would expect God himself to perform when they ask in the name of Jesus.

Therefore, Jesus said that anyone who has faith in him can perform the same miracles and even greater miracles. He staked his own name on this guarantee: "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." Some Christians keep muttering like a mantra, "For the glory of God, for the glory of God," but they are cessationists. How is God glorified? Jesus said that he is glorified when we perform the same miracles he did and even greater miracles by the power of the Father, and in the name of Jesus. Getting whatever we ask from God is what it means to be a Christian, God glorifying himself by giving us what we ask. This is not an optional or dispensational aspect of discipleship, because according to

Jesus, this is discipleship -- getting whatever we want from God, and especially miracles, in the name of Jesus.

Then he immediately said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (14:15). What did he command just now? Do the same miracles, do greater miracles, glorify the Father by asking for "whatever," especially miracles. Now if someone refuses to perform miracles, refuses to even try, and even speaks against this, who has the authority to say that such a person loves Jesus? If you dare, go ahead. I surely do not have the gall to say better things about someone than Jesus did. If Jesus said that someone does not love him, I confess that I am entirely helpless to contradict him. I have no such authority and no such arrogance to defy Christ to his face. And surely I am not stupid enough to insist that such a person loves him.

We have limited ourselves to John 14 and 15, and restricted ourselves to only a few themes. But Jesus kept talking about this, so that all the way at 16:23-24, we still hear him say, "I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." When something is repeated so many times, and so emphatically, many creeds would have devoted entire sections to it. In fact, the creeds would include doctrines based on only a few biblical passages, sometimes only one, and sometimes even when there is none! And even those passages they include are often distorted, in order to promote their man-made doctrines and traditions. Certain items that have much less biblical basis are asserted as tests of orthodoxy. Yet we hear nothing about what Jesus commanded in the creeds. Nothing! We hear nothing about asking and getting the miracles we want from God in the name of Jesus. We hear nothing about seeing this as the fruit of faith, as the evidence of discipleship, and as the way to glorify God. It is directly and explicitly stated as the test of orthodoxy, and how someone could recognize true disciples (John 15:7-8). But we hear nothing about it. If the topic is mentioned at all, it comes as an official denial, that it has ceased, or that it is wrong, or something like this. Why? As Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

All this is to say that according to Jesus, if you have been chosen for salvation, you have been chosen to perform the same miracles that Jesus performed, and even greater miracles, so that the Father may be glorified through the name of Jesus. If you are a Christian, this is your life's purpose. If you do not preach this, then you do not know predestination. You might as well be an Arminian. An Arminian who believes God's promises is so much better than a Calvinist who denies God's promises, who appeals to "the will of God" against the word of God, and refuses to allow God to keep his word. This is the worst kind of heretic. This is deformed theology. It is anti-covenant theology. Yet Calvinists are proud to be cessationists, when they should be ashamed and terrified.

Which is better? A Calvinist who claims to believe in predestination, but who refuses to obey Christ, and refuses to bear fruit and work miracles, or a Pentecostal who does not believe or understand predestination, but who obeys Christ, and who bears fruit and works miracles? The Pentecostal ought to become convinced by the biblical doctrine of predestination when it is explained to him, but even in his ignorance he is now light-years

ahead. He is living his life's purpose. The Calvinist might like to talk about predestination, but if in doctrine and action he does not fit the description of someone who has been chosen for life, then we have no basis to believe that he is one of the chosen. The Calvinist has a poor grasp of predestination in the first place. Even in areas where he appears to agree with Scripture more than other people, his doctrinal formulations are incompetent and paradoxical. He is absurdly weak where he is the strongest. Combined with the fact that the Calvinist refuses to accept what Jesus said we are predestined to do and to become, it means that he does not even believe in biblical predestination. The Calvinist who is also a cessationist does not believe in predestination any more than a Pentecostal who is an Arminian. He is just more hypocritical and disobedient.

By the supreme authority of Jesus Christ, I rebuke every doctrine, every creed, every church, every denomination, every theologian, and every other thing, person, or institution that asserts the doctrine of divine sovereignty, election, reprobation, or predestination, but at the same time asserts cessationism, or in any other way and by any other doctrine or policy fails to also assert the doctrine that anyone who has faith in Christ should perform the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles, as a matter of ordinary faith, spiritual fruit, discipleship, and obedience.

I command each one to repent in public, and either overturn or revise all historic and current creeds, doctrines, policies, credentials, and institutions that continue to permit or support such blatant resistance to the direct promises and commands of Christ. Here is where my responsibilities end toward all those who fall under the statement. I cannot force them to change, but it is my duty to testify against them, so that God may confirm them in their disobedience and multiply their guilt, or else turn them from their wickedness and destruction by his Spirit. The more they claim to know the word of God, the more they claim to defend the faith, the more they claim to uphold the Scripture, but persist in their unbelief and disobedience, the more they condemn themselves.

A true disciple of Jesus Christ is not predestined to believe the mere idea of predestination, but he is predestined to believe what Scripture says we are predestined for, and to produce what Scripture says we are predestined to do – to bear fruit, to receive from God, and to work miracles. In our ministry, we do not make Calvinists and Pentecostals out of people. We value the gospel and our labor too much to aim for something so utterly idiotic. But we make disciples for Jesus Christ. We do not accept stupid theories from men, and we spit on their stupid rules and rituals, their stupid labels and traditions. Again, it is not that they are sufficient as either an asset or a threat to deserve much attention, but we value the gospel and our labor too much to allow mere men to control our doctrine, our mission, and our conscience. We will be all that Jesus said we should be, and we will have all that he said we should have. Anyone who tries to steal anything of the gospel from us can burn in hell. They do not have to perish – they can believe Jesus Christ. But if they want to disobey Christ, they will disobey Christ. And if they want to burn in hell, they can burn in hell.

(Sometimes labels are convenient, so that for example, if some people wish to call us Calvinists, or Pentecostals, or charismatics, or whatever, we might not always deny it. However, these are at best nicknames, not identities. Here is where traditionalists step into

error. They embrace and cherish these things as their identities, and then they would defend them as if they defend their very lives. Now they are no longer disciples of Christ, but followers of men. When labels lead to limitations and misunderstandings, and idolatry, as they often do, it is best to limit their use or cast them aside. So we will sometimes tolerate nicknames when we speak to outsiders, but among ourselves, we tend to despise them.)

No cessationist is qualified to teach predestination. This is just like no one who rejects the atonement is qualified to practice evangelism. No one who believes less than all the wonderful things that God predestined for us should speak a word about predestination. Such a person's doctrine of predestination will always become a distortion and misdirection. Regardless of what label he gives himself, and we know people love their labels so much, such a person is an enemy of the doctrine, and an enemy of the gospel. The same applies to anyone who claims to believe these things only on paper, but refuses to affirm and teach what Jesus said about the same works and greater works, and refuses to take action in asking and getting miracles from God in the name of Jesus, even when the proper occasions arise before him. Calling yourself a Pentecostal or a Charismatic is just as foolish and worthless as calling yourself a Calvinist, when whatever you call yourself, you do not believe or obey the word of God. All of this is nothing more than religious posturing. It is nothing more than pious swagger. There is no faith, no action, and no power behind any of it.

The Bible teaches predestination, and predestination guarantees miracles by the gospel. Therefore, the biblical doctrine of predestination must guarantee miracles. If this is denied, then it is not the biblical doctrine of predestination. To illustrate, Paul wrote that those God foreknew he also predestined, and those he predestined he also called, and those he called he also justified, and those he justified he also glorified. If you have one thing, you also have the next, and if you have one thing, you also have the rest. You cannot say, "I am predestined to be justified by God, but not predestined to be glorified." No, it is one decree and one doctrine. They are one just like God is one. You cannot love the Father and hate the Son, but he who has the Son also has the Father. If you are not predestined to be glorified, then you are not predestined to be justified. You cannot say that only the apostles were predestined to be glorified, and it is enough that you are justified. And you cannot say that justification passed away after the apostles or after the first century, but that you would skip justification and move straight to glorification. No, it is one decree of election and one doctrine of predestination. You either have everything that belongs to predestination, or you have none of it.

Likewise, you cannot say that you are predestined for justification, but not predestined for miracles. You cannot reject predestination to the ministry of miracles without renouncing every other thing that belongs to predestination, including your conversion and justification. There is no biblical basis or logical method to surgically remove this one part from salvation. It is one with the gospel, so that it is not really a part, but it is as good as the whole. You cannot chop off Christ's right arm, rip out his eyes, cut off his legs, and then decide to keep the rest of him, and still think of yourself as his disciple or even a spiritual hero, a defender of the faith. You cannot make a monster out of Christ and expect

to escape unscathed. Christ is one. If you cut off part of him, you are cut off from him. You cannot have a modular Christ. If you reject part of him, you lose all of him.

Forget about spiritual gifts. What does that have anything to do with what we are talking about? Jesus said that anyone who has faith can do the same miracles he did and even greater miracles, because he will get whatever he asks from God (John 14:12-14), and he said that this has to do with fruit, not gift (John 15:7-8, 16). So I am not thinking about any spiritual gift at all. I am talking about spiritual fruit. I am talking about the fruit of ordinary discipleship. I am talking about what naturally happens when any person abides in Christ and have his words abide in him. I am talking about obeying Jesus, who told us to do the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles. I am talking about asking for whatever I want from God the Father, so that he would be glorified through the name of Jesus. Let all the gifts cease, and it would not change a thing. I am talking about predestination. God has chosen me and appointed me to bear fruit, fruit that will endure, so that whatever I ask the Father, he will give it to me. By this, I show myself to be the disciple of Christ, and the Father will be glorified in his name. The fruit of discipleship has not ceased. The God who glorifies himself has not ceased. The name of Jesus has not ceased. My love for Christ has not ceased, so that I obey his commands to perform the same miracles and greater miracles, and so that God will glorify himself by giving me whatever I ask.

If the fruit of discipleship has ceased, then discipleship itself has ceased, and this means that no one can be a disciple of Christ, and this in turn means that no one can be saved, and everyone will burn in hell. But if anyone can still be saved by faith in Christ, then that person can be his disciple, and the fruit of discipleship is that the man will perform the same works that Jesus did, and even greater works, and that God will be glorified by giving him whatever he asks in the name of Jesus. This is the gospel, and there is only one gospel. Anyone who rejects this also rejects the gospel, and also rejects Jesus Christ and salvation. I am repeating this in several ways, and this is because it is truly as straightforward and undeniable as it appears, and there is no fanciful version of this, unless we wish to obscure the teaching and suppress it. We go back and forth repeating what Jesus said in several ways, and many people still do not get this. It does not "click" with them. And they will still not get it, because they don't want to get it. Religious hypocrites keep talking about God's sovereignty, but they will not respect his decision. They will not believe his words, or obey his commands. There is no salvation à la carte. It is not up to you to decide whether there is healing and prosperity from God by faith. It is not up to you to decide if this has ceased or if that continues. It is not up to you to decide if Jesus meant what he said. It is not up to you to decide if it is possible for men and women who believe in Christ to perform the same miracles and even greater miracles. And it is not up to you -- thank God it is not up to you! -- to decide what the rest of us can think or do. Because we love Christ, we will do what he said. If you refuse to do what he said, if you refuse to teach what he said, or if you speak against what he said -- if you do any of this -- then we all know what you are.

If someone claims to love Jesus Christ, then let him show it by asking and getting miracles from God (John 14:11-15). If someone claims to abide in Jesus Christ, then let him show it by asking and getting miracles from God (John 15:7-8). If someone claims that the words of Christ abide in him, then let him show it by asking and getting miracles from God

(John 15:7-8). If someone claims to bear fruit for God, then let him show it by asking and getting miracles from God (John 15:8, 16). If someone claims to bring glory to God, then let him show it by asking and getting miracles from God (John 14:13, 15:8). If someone claims to be chosen by God, then let him show it by asking and getting miracles from God (John 15:16). But if someone does not ask and get miracles from God, and if he refuses to even try, and if he speaks against this, then according to the words of Christ, this person does not love Christ, does not abide in Christ, does not have the words of Christ in him, does not bear fruit for God, does not bring glory to God, and he is not chosen by God.

All arguments are futile. This person is damned at least six times in one short section of Scripture. If he teaches predestination, he is damned once more by his hypocrisy. He embraces an empty idea of an eternal decree, but he rejects the content of the eternal decree. Predestination is not something to be toyed with like this. It will crush him like a bug. By talking about predestination, he shows that he has an awareness of the doctrine, but then by denying what predestination inevitably implies and produces, he testifies against himself and damns his own soul. It is as if he announces himself a reprobate, predestined for hellfire.

For those of us who believe, predestination is good news. The faith in our hearts is evidence that we have been chosen for salvation, predestined for blessing and greatness. We have been foreordained to follow Christ, to remain in him, and to have his words remain in us, so that we can ask whatever is our will, and it will be done for us. As he said, "You shall ask what you will." No matter what the Bible says, some of you will always retort: "Yeah, but only if it is the will of God." Um...no, he made a point of saying, "You shall ask what YOU WILL." He deliberately said, "You will ask whatever you wish." Jesus could have said "the will of God" as many times as he wanted. If he had wanted to say "the will of God," he would have said "the will of God." God's will is for you to ask what "you will" or what "you wish."

If you insist on "the will of God" in this context, you change the word of God and expose yourself as reprobate. But you still lose, because Jesus told you the will of God. He told you to ask and get the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles. The Bible says this straight to your face. Why do you refuse to do it? Why do you refuse to ask for the will of God, you hypocrite? You go around saying, "The will of God, the will of God." You go around defending the doctrine of divine sovereignty and attacking the people who do not believe like you. You are so proud of your resolve that, adding to the name of Christ himself, you would name yourself after men who were associated with the doctrine. But when the Bible tells you what the will of God is, you reject it. And when someone asks for the will of God or teaches the will of God, you forbid it. See? You have never cared about the will of God. In fact, you have always been very much against it.

Predestination is good news for those of us who believe the gospel, not those who pretend to believe, but those who truly believe. We have been foreordained to bear much fruit, fruit that will remain. We have been foreordained to have faith toward God and love toward Christ, so that we will obey all his commands. We have been foreordained to perform the same miracles that Jesus performed, and even greater miracles, because he promised, "If

you ask anything in my name, I will do it." We have been foreordained to receive answers to our prayers – not just empty platitudes and vague providences, but supernatural manifestations of exactly what we want and what we ask. This is our destiny. You are predestined to experience success in the work of healing and prophecy. You are predestined to lay hands on the sick, and see them recover. You are predestined to receive visions and dreams, tongues and interpretations, and all kinds of signs and wonders in the name of Jesus. Then as it is written, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." And this is how we use the doctrine of divine sovereignty. God will give us whatever we ask in the name of Jesus, and because he is sovereign, he will do "immeasurably more" than whatever we ask, and even more than whatever we can think or imagine.

19. "Doubt is illegal in the kingdom..."

Gabriel the angel was sent to Zechariah to announce that he would have a son, who would become John the Baptist. Zechariah said, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." Now Zechariah was a priest, and he was supposed to be a religious leader and model to the people, but he responded in unbelief. When God tells us something or makes a promise to us, we must believe it even if we have never experienced anything like it, and even if no one else has ever experienced anything like it. There is never an excuse to doubt God, but even if there is ever an excuse, Zechariah did not have one. He knew the story of Abraham and Sarah, who received Isaac by the promise of God when they were old. He knew of other individuals in Scripture who received sons and daughters even though they were barren. In fact, even if he had never received this vision, he could have believed God and received healing. His faith could have renewed his youth and overturned the barrenness. As it is written, "I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span." Like most Christian teachers in our day, Zechariah was a religious leader but did not believe the Scripture, and he answered in unbelief. So the angel said, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

People often read their political and ethical ideals into the word of God. They think that good politics is also good dogmatics. They think that democracy is good for government, so the kingdom of God must also be a democracy. But the kingdom of God is not a democracy, but a monarchy, even an absolute and eternal dictatorship -- Jesus Christ is king forever. You say, "Didn't they vote to nominate deacons in the Bible? And don't we vote on things in our churches?" Of course. Even under a dictatorship, members of a family unit might vote on what they will have for dinner, but they cannot vote to change the law of the nation. They cannot even vote to decide what the law means, and then follow that interpretation instead of the law. Thus members of a church might vote on certain items to maintain order in the congregation, but they cannot vote to change the word of God. And they cannot vote to decide what the word of God means, and then follow their creed instead of the word of God. But so many people who claim to be Christians have done this evil thing. This is how they have operated their institutions for hundreds of years.

People's own political and ethical ideals are not always what the word of God teaches. Free speech might be good for a democracy, but the kingdom of God is not a democracy, and there is no free speech in the kingdom of God. You are not allowed to say anything that God disapproves. You might not always be punished for it, at least not immediately, but as Jesus said, "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." This is shocking to historic pagan Christianity. Shouldn't we have free debates and airing of opinions in the church? Of course not. You are not allowed to utter blasphemy. You are not allowed to teach heresy. Even if these two restrictions are grudgingly admitted by some Christians, they would likely regard the third

one as extremism. Christians cherish this kind of speech, and they use it to define much of their orthodoxy. Thus they would react with indignation when you tell them it is forbidden in the kingdom of God. What is this third kind of forbidden speech? Unbelief. No one is allowed to speak unbelief.

Unbelief is banned. Doubt is illegal in the kingdom of God. If God says that something would happen, you are not allowed to wonder if it really would happen. If God says that you are able to do something, you are not allowed to suppose that only other people or special people were able to do it, or that it has passed away so that now no one is able to do it. If you doubt God, then God wants you to shut up. Shut your stupid mouth. Here he did not only correct Zechariah or made him shut up about this one thing, but he did not permit the man to speak at all. He shut him up by a miracle. Unbelief is this vile in the sight of God. Do you think that he would want someone who speaks doubt in a position of leadership, or to even teach his people? Do you think that God would want you to write unbelief into your creeds, and then build a denomination on top of it? Do you think that he would want you to give any money to a church who orders people to doubt his promises and his commands? Or would he want the whole bunch of you to shut up? Shut up until you repent and learn to talk some faith.

You protest, "Wait a minute. Do you mean that in a Christian church or institution, if the Bible says that a miracle can happen when we have faith, but a leader speaks doubt concerning this, he should lose his job?" YES. Absolutely, YES. If his job has to do with speaking, and especially teaching, then he should lose his job. He should not be permitted to pray in public, or for example, to even offer a public report on the organization's financial situation -- because he will speak unbelief about it. Upon investigation, if we perceive that it is a matter of spiritual sickness, and that he wishes to have faith but finds himself unable at this time, then he can probably be transferred to another position that does not need him to speak or to teach, such as the accounting or janitorial department. But to be a pastor or professor? NO, NO, NO. The church should react against doubt speech far stronger than the world reacts against "hate speech." No Christian organization should allow unbelief to speak. This must be specified in an institute's academic standard and code of conduct.

Christians supposedly would not allow an atheist to become pastor and preach to them, but they would welcome someone who doubts the promises of the gospel to indoctrinate them week after week, month after month, year after year. They would pay someone like this to become a professor in their seminaries to train future leaders of the church. If someone does not believe in healing the sick in the name of Jesus, he should not be speaking to God's people. If someone does not believe in visions, dreams, and prophecy from the Spirit of God, he should not open his mouth in public. If someone doubts that when we seek first the kingdom of God, all the things that the pagans seek will be added to us, then he should not have a speaking job in any Christian institution. But Christians have itching ears for unbelief. If someone like this writes a book on accepting pointless suffering, Christians would give him an award. Another person who merely repeats what the Bible promises is called a heretic, a fanatic, someone who teaches eastern religion, or some such thing. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Why is the church in the state that it is in? For that matter, why is the world in the state that it is in? Christians

wish to blame the politicians. Then they want to blame the charismatics. No, the problem is YOU. It has always been you, if you speak unbelief, if you permit unbelief, and if you finance unbelief.

Someone doubted a message of healing delivered by an angel, and he was forced to silence by divine power. Now someone greater than Gabriel had spoken. He is so much greater that Gabriel himself would fall down and worship him. This one said that if we have faith, we can perform a miracle of nature like he did when he spoke to a tree, and that if we have faith, we can even speak to a mountain and command it to move. He said that we can heal the sick and cast out demons. He said that we can perform the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles. He said that God would give us whatever we ask in his name. He said that we would receive the same power that he had, by the same Spirit that he had, so that we would receive visions, dreams, and prophecies. If a man was silenced because he doubted an angel, can we afford to doubt someone so much greater than an angel, and who delivered such greater promises? Let us not lie to ourselves. God is not mocked. We will reap what we sow.

20. "Cessationists are more guilty..."

Cessationists criticize the charismatics for errors in doctrines and practices. Of course, very often the cessationists are the ones who are wrong, or the ones who are more wrong. However, it is sometimes true that the charismatics indeed teach false doctrines and exhibit strange behaviors.

The criticisms do not apply to us. We oppose the damnable heresy of the cessationists, and we are also free from the errors of the charismatics. There is no need to identify ourselves with any group, but that said, we would rather associate with unrefined faith than with sophisticated unbelief. Although we are not subject to the usual criticisms against the charismatics, the conflict is a matter of importance for the health of the church.

Our view is that the cessationists are in fact the ones guilty of the errors of the charismatics. The charismatics are without excuse where they are wrong. Each of us must assume responsibility for our doctrines and practices. But the cessationists are more guilty for charismatic errors than the charismatics themselves. This is because the cessationists historically had more access to intellectual resources, and they also claim to have attained superior scholarship. Still, they have failed -- not only failed, but proudly and fiercely refused -- to offer a theology of spiritual powers and miracles that is faithful to the promises and commands of the gospel.

The cessationists have been the most ardent enemies of the doctrines of grace, the grace of God that guarantees powers and miracles to those who believe. They have condemned and persecuted the gospel even more than the atheists and the satanists. The only way many people could liberate themselves to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ has been to leave the thoughts and structures of historic unbelief. The result is that they have superior faith and obedience to the gospel, but they sometimes lack the resources to develop precision and refinement.

I am not saying that the cessationists are better in doctrine -- no, they are worse -- but I am saying that they have had more intellectual resources, which makes them more damnable for having failed to produce doctrines and practices that are according to the gospel of faith and power from Jesus Christ.

It is useless to be more precise, if it is only to formulate doctrines of unbelief. But if they are precise in unbelief, it is evidence that they could have instead offered a precise formulation for the biblical doctrines that promote miracle powers and gospel blessings, and thus reduced the likelihood of charismatic errors. Therefore, the cessationists are to be blamed for charismatic errors. Every time they criticize the charismatics, they condemn themselves.

Nevertheless, the theological landscape has been shifting. There are now charismatic scholars who are just as competent in areas where the cessationists have been somewhat correct, and these charismatic scholars are also competent in those areas where the

cessationists have been wrong. Charismatic scholarship has been overtaking cessationist scholarship. This has the potential to make cessationist scholarship irrelevant. And if this spreads to charismatic ministry, it has the potential to make cessationist ministry irrelevant. The Bible says that when a city was under siege, sometimes the inhabitants were forced to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, but of course the people stopped doing that once they were liberated by the power of God. Christians do not have to eat cessationist &\$%?# when they have a better choice.

Since the charismatic scholars approach Christian doctrines with more faith, and because they are overall in more agreement with Scripture, they have become superior even in areas where the cessationists have been traditionally somewhat correct. If you disagree with the Bible about the ministry of the Spirit, it will affect your interpretation of the ministry of Christ. If you disagree with the Bible about God's promises on physical and material blessings, it will affect your understanding of everything from the atonement to ethics and politics. "This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough." The Bible's doctrines are interconnected. Unbelief wrecks systematic theology. It corrupts the entire body of truth.

The way forward is for charismatic scholars to become even better theologians and to become better practitioners, and some have never been practitioners. They are universally still hindered by the unbelief of cessationist scholarship and restricted by cessationist categories and frameworks. They are still not extreme enough when it comes to gospel miracles and blessings, not nearly as extreme as what the Bible teaches.

Their implementations are disturbingly weak. If they attempt these things at all rather than just talking about them, they often still leave the matter up to "the sovereignty of God" without regard to the promise of God – it is a phony appeal to divine sovereignty to excuse their weak faith. And if they attempt these things at all, they often achieve too little results when they operate in things like healing and prophecy. One is not a doer of the word by merely refuting cessationism. He is a doer of the word only when he begins to heal the sick, cast out demons, speak in tongues, and prophesy. Charismatic scholars must pursue the powers of the gospel with total abandon.

21. "Powers have extended to every ordinary agent..."

Cessationists are very proud of their insights on redemptive history. But as Jesus said, "Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?"

The cessationists do not teach things that are merely off course. That would be bad enough, for it is written, "do not turn from it to the right or to the left." But the cessationists assert the opposite of what the Bible teaches.

The Bible makes it clear that we live in a time of maximum miracle power, but the cessationists portray this as a time of minimum miracle power, even zero miracle power. They think that the gospel has expired. They think that this is a time when miracles ought to have ceased, but this is a time when miracles ought to have increased.

They think that this is a time when miraculous powers have ceased because every special agent has died, but this is a time when miraculous powers have extended to every ordinary agent. The manifestations of the Spirit are given to anyone who has faith in Jesus Christ, to any gender, to any period, to any class, to any nation.

The cessationists have no understanding of the history of redemption. They have missed both the spirit and the substance of the gospel. They have missed the time of their visitation.

22. "Would you stake your salvation on it?"

Critics attack those who use an "inward witness" to discern the will of God. They say that we must look to the word of God to learn the will of God, and not to a feeling or a hunch, or something like that. However, these same people would accept a symptom of sickness as the will of God and not accept what the Bible says about it. They would attack those who think that they are spiritually discerning the will of God, who claim to listen to their spirits for signals that agree with the word of God. But they would defend themselves when they are physically discerning the will of God, when they surrender to their symptoms even when these things disagree with the word of God. They would defend this kind of thinking as good old orthodoxy. This is textbook religious hypocrisy.

Just because something happens does not mean that it is "the will of God" in the sense we mean here. For example, Jesus called Peter to walk out to him on the water, and at first Peter was successful, but then he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. Jesus did not say, "This must be the will of God, so just sink and die." Rather, he reached out and held up Peter. Then he did not rebuke the Father for the will of God, but he rebuked Peter for his lack of faith. He told Peter to walk to him on the water. He told Peter to experience the miracle. He gave him his word. When the miracle failed, Jesus did not use the will of God as the explanation, but the lack of faith as the explanation.

We must not allow the circumstances to dictate to us the will of God, and then proceed on that basis, but we must allow the scriptures to dictate to us the will of God, and then proceed on that basis. Peter had God's word on walking on the water. He had no excuse to sink. He should have said, "Jesus gave me his word, therefore it is his will for me to walk on the water. So I refuse to sink, but I will act on his word and live this miracle." Likewise, if we have God's word on the healing of the body, we have no excuse to be sick. Do not be like the religious frauds. Never look at your feelings and circumstances as divine revelations.

The symptoms of sickness offer no indication of "the will of God." What about the words of God? What do they say? If they say, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses," if they say, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover," if they say, "The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up," if they say, "He forgives all our iniquities, and heals all our diseases," if they say, "He sent his word and healed them," and if they say many other things like these, then get up and be healed. That is the will of God. Stop hiding behind "the will of God" when the problem is your lack of faith.

Even what appears to be ineffective prayer is not an indication of the will of God. The disciples failed to cast out a demon from a boy. Was it the will of God for the boy to suffer? No. Jesus cast out the demon, and then rebuked the disciples for their unbelief. This is not bad news, but good news. It means that if God says you can have something, then you can have it. Even if you do not receive it after prayer, you do not have to accept that as the will of God. Get some faith, then march right back in there and get what you want.

The man of unbelief says, "I am suffering this thing. Since this is happening, then it must be the will of God for me. Therefore, I will accept it and consider how to live with it. The Bible promises healing from God, but God is sovereign, so although God is contradicting his own promise, he is still sovereign, and I should submit to this situation as the will of God regardless of what the Bible teaches me to believe or to do about it." On the other hand, the man of faith says, "I am suffering this thing. Since God says something else in his word, and since this thing contradicts what God says I can have, I refuse to accept it as the will of God. Therefore, I will reject this and follow the word of God in how to confront it and destroy it. God is sovereign, and if he has chosen me for salvation by Jesus Christ, then he has given me faith in his word. Therefore, if he has chosen me, I am surely able to believe his word on miracle healing, and I will look at his word and not at the symptoms of sickness. I will look to the word of God as the will of God, rather than to circumstances as the will of God. I will not be like someone who does not know God or his word."

Concerning Abraham, the Bible says, "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead -- since he was about a hundred years old -- and that Sarah's womb was also dead." He was informed about his physical condition. He was aware of the symptoms. But he also knew that God had said something about it. "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." He did not accept the natural circumstances as "the will of God." To accept his situation would not have been a sign of humility or submission, but it would have been to "waver through unbelief." Instead, he looked to the word of God, and the word of God said that he would have a son. He gave "glory to God," not by stupidly repeating the phrase like some people do, and not by accepting the situation as "providence," but he rejected the existing reality, because God had said something about it.

God has also said many things concerning us, about our health, about our money, about our relationships, about our ministries, about miracles, about prophecies, and about many other things. Do we take our symptoms of sickness as revelations from God about his will for us, or do we take his promises of healing as revelations from God about his will for us? Do we take our current circumstances as extra-biblical revelations of "the will of God," or do we accept existing biblical revelations about the will of God?

The Bible describes Abraham's faith, a faith that rejected circumstances but believed the word of God instead. Then it says, "This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.'" In the same place, the Bible says, "So then, he is the father of all who believe...in order that righteousness might be credited to them...who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had." Abraham is our model of faith. Those who walk in his footsteps of faith are saved. This kind of faith is how anyone can have righteousness credited to him. He believed in God's promise against his physical condition. He was counted as righteous by believing in healing. Of course, it was because he believed God, but God said something about healing. God also said something about healing to us, more than what he said to Abraham. Do we believe? If this is the kind of faith that is credited with righteousness, and if we do not have the same kind of faith, what is the necessary implication?

False teachers claim that they accept the Bible as the will of God, and not manifestations. They are liars. They reject supernatural manifestations, even those that agree with the Bible, but they accept natural manifestations as if they are revelations of the will of God. They allow their thoughts and their lives to be dictated by what happens to them and around them, instead of by what the word of God says to them. Doesn't this force us to make certain conclusions about them? Do we have a choice?

Suppose a man commits sin, and he says that it is the will of God, and then he continues in that direction, when the Bible tells him that he is wrong, and tells him what to do instead. He rejects Jesus Christ, but he says that this is because it is the will of God, and then he keeps on rejecting Christ, when the Bible tells him that he is wrong, and tells him what to do instead. What would we call such a person? We would indeed acknowledge the sovereignty of God, and we would say that everything has happened according to God's decree, including this man's unbelief. But we would not call him a saint. What would we call such a person? We would call him a reprobate. He is destined for hell. He has rejected the word of God, and his appeal to divine sovereignty is the excuse of a reprobate. He could even be correct in terms of metaphysics, but this does not save him, does it? His appeal to divine sovereignty is only an ontological explanation of his reprobation. The fact that he offers a description of his reprobation does not cancel the reprobation.

Now suppose another person suffers sickness, and he says that it is the will of God, and then he continues in that direction, when the Bible tells him he is wrong, and tells him what to do instead. He teaches against receiving healing by faith in Jesus Christ, but he says that sickness happens by the will of God, when the Bible tells him what to believe and what to teach instead. The Bible tells him to receive healing by faith, and that the Father would be glorified when he receives what he asks in the name of Jesus. But this man does the opposite. He enshrines the sickness and calls it the will of God, and tells everybody how he suffers it for "the glory of God." However, to appeal to an ontological principle to explain his unbelief does not exempt him, but rather condemns him, because he is in fact appealing to his own reprobation as the explanation. If we call the first person a reprobate, what would we call this second one? A brave pilgrim? A theologian extraordinaire? Or shall we admit the obvious conclusion? You say, "There is a difference! There is a difference!" Really? Would you stake your salvation on it? Come on, let us stop deceiving ourselves.

23. The Weapon of Divine Sovereignty

Suppose you hold in your hand the most powerful weapon in existence, capable of demolishing all the combined forces of the universe at the press of a button. The most stupid thing that you can do is to point it at your own face, and then try to press that button over and over again. But this is what Christians have done with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God through the centuries. No enemy can ever hope to survive against this weapon. The only way is to manipulate the person to point it at himself. And except for several token concessions to avoid alarm, the devil has achieved almost complete success in doing this throughout church history.

God has revealed to us the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and Christians have used it to hurt themselves, to scare themselves, and to limit themselves. Worse, Christians have pointed the doctrine back at God himself, and used it to eradicate his own promises and commands. By a covenant, signed and ratified by the blood of his own Son, the Sovereign God has guaranteed to us visions, dreams, prophecies, miracle healing, material provision, spiritual power, total victory, and many other things. We could use the doctrine to increase faith, reverse defeat, and overcome suffering. We could use it to announce that God will do for us even more than what we ask or think.

Success is our destiny. Power is our destiny. Healing is our destiny. Prophecy is our destiny. Our destiny is to preach the gospel with overwhelming power, and to perform the same miracles that Jesus did, and even greater miracles, so that God will be glorified by giving us whatever we ask in the name of Christ. But Christians have usually used the doctrine to declare that God would use his sovereignty to produce things that are against what we ask or think, and even against his own word. Predestination is often used as an excuse for unbelief and failure, and "the will of God" is used to avoid blame. This satanic deception has been codified in historic books and creeds, and enshrined as orthodoxy in churches and denominations.

24. Father is not Buddha

It is ironic that some Christian apologists, self-appointed cult watchers, have said that the teachings of Jesus on faith were derived from eastern religions. Jesus said that if a man has faith, he can even speak to a mountain and command it to move. He said that if the man does not doubt in his heart, but if he believes that what he himself says will happen, then he will have what he says. And he added that whatever a person asks in prayer, if he believes he receives it, then he will have it. This faith teaching has been almost universally rejected in church history. Jesus has always been contradicted by historic orthodoxy on this issue.

When this doctrine of Jesus is taught nowadays, some cult watchers condemn it as eastern religion. They do not attack Jesus in the open, but they make this accusation against the people who repeat his teaching. The real target is Jesus himself. Some of us are actually from the east, and we think the accusation is laughable and bizarre. This is because the teachings on prayer in western churches sound exactly like the teachings of eastern religions, only they use different terms.

No eastern religion teaches that a man can speak to a physical object or condition and command it to obey, and is in reality able to demonstrate it in front of people, such as when a Christian preacher curses a cancer to death or pulls up a person from a wheelchair. And like the confrontation between Moses and the sorcerers, when a witch or somebody tries to do something by an evil spirit, the Christian is able to shut down the whole thing in a word by the name of Jesus, so that the evil power fizzles and disappears. Eastern religions cannot do this. On the other hand, eastern meditation seems to have the same intention, principle, and effect as prayer in historic western Christianity.

They say that prayer does not change circumstances but ourselves. Right, so it is like eastern meditation. Then they say that, well, they mean that prayer does not change God but it changes us. And right...so it is like eastern meditation. Historic western Christian prayer is fake prayer. It is eastern religion in Christian terminology. Yes...yes, of course there are those who pray with confidence that God will change our hearts, and that he would produce spiritual changes in other people too. And...since this is as far as they go, it is just like eastern religions, only that they teach false gods. But do you believe in the true God, if you refuse to accept what he tells you about faith and prayer? You confess the true God, but you do not have true faith if you contradict what he says. And then you treat him like how eastern religions treat their false gods.

The Bible teaches the kind of faith that can physically throw a mountain into the sea. It teaches the kind of prayer that can heal the sick, and raise a man up from his deathbed. We are not trying to change God when we pray, but we are counting on God to stay the same, so that he would keep his promise to change our circumstances. If God promises you something, but he changes, then you might not get it. But if he promises you something, and he never changes, then you will surely get it. If your circumstances do not reflect his promises to the prayer of faith, then this means that your circumstances are guaranteed to

change when you make the prayer of faith. So the fact that God does not change does not mean that your situation will not change, but when you have faith, the fact that God does not change guarantees that your situation will change. In contrast, followers of eastern religions can only change themselves, because they have no God.

They claim that it is wrong to say, "Prayer changes things." We admit that prayer itself does not change things -- if there is no God, prayer would change nothing (except ourselves, of course). Once this is acknowledged, there is nothing wrong with the statement. We would mean that God changes things when we pray in faith. As the Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." There it refers to the prayer of faith changing even the weather, and working miracles of nature and of healing. They do not want to say that prayer changes things, not because they wish to avoid being crude or because they wish to uphold the sovereignty of God (the sovereign God says prayer changes things), but they do not want to say it because their prayers never change anything, usually not even themselves. Sometimes their prayers indeed manage to change their mental states, and produce a little comfort, but often they cannot even do that. Their prayers are often less effective than Buddhist meditation.

Forget about changing the weather by faith! Most of them do not even have enough faith to use God as a psychological crutch. Jesus' doctrine of faith and prayer is a threat to their religious pride, so they must persecute anyone who repeats his teaching. But they are church leaders, and they are supposed to teach what Jesus said. What to do? Instead of admitting the truth and repenting of their inferior faith, they work hard to redefine the very nature of prayer for all of God's people. However, as long as God is not dead and the Bible is not gone, they will never totally succeed. Jesus said that I will receive whatever I ask from the Father. When I ask for spiritual things, I will get spiritual things. When I ask for material things, I will get material things. My prayers will be fulfilled in ways that are impossible for men, even in ways that are utterly unnatural. This is authentic Christianity. No eastern religion is like this.

I have never believed anything but the Christian faith, but I can imagine the disappointment of a Chinese convert to Christianity, perhaps from Buddhism. He thinks that he has found a Father who cares for him. He comes over to America, supposedly a stronghold of Christianity, hoping to fellowship with others who could teach him more about this Father God. And what does he find? Christian Buddhism! This is not real Christianity, but fake Christianity. It is something that uses Christian terms, but rejects its doctrines and effects. Real Christianity is exactly what Jesus said: You will have what you say. You will get what you pray. You will perform the same miracles and greater miracles. You will receive whatever you ask from the Father in the name of Jesus, so that God may be glorified, and so that your joy may be complete, showing yourselves to be the true disciples of Christ. You will receive miracle power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will receive visions, dreams, prophecies, and signs and wonders. This is truly different from any other religion, eastern or otherwise.

25. "Literacy is devastating for cessationism..."

You do not need to be a professional theologian to combat cessationism and other doctrines of demons. If you have knowledge, use your knowledge. If you can argue, then argue. For those of us who are called to ministry as a vocation, it is especially important to follow the footsteps of Christ in preaching and healing. We announce the truth to the masses, and the Spirit of God will change the hearts of those called to believe the word of God. As for the demonstration of the gospel, there are supernatural things that we can do other than healing, but I recommend placing an emphasis on it. The reason is that the ministry of healing not only shows forth the teaching of the gospel, but it also displays the kindness of God, and it removes suffering and saves lives.

Compassion is our motivation. We already believe the truth, and we have faith to receive for ourselves, so we are going to be fine no matter what other people believe. We teach people the word of God for their benefit. We do not need them to believe before we can receive. If they refuse to believe, it will only hurt them. Our motivation is not to vindicate ourselves. Relative to my own life, I do not care what other people believe, since I have all that I need. I do not need to prove anything to them. I do not need to care about whether they believe in healing. They are the ones staying sick, not me. But I tell them the truth anyway. And we do that because God has commissioned us, and he has placed his love in our hearts, so that we wish to save the people from their sin and suffering. Surely we ought to fight unbelief, and when it comes to demonstration, there are other kinds of miracles besides healing the sick, but begin with ministries of compassion, and then we will both uphold the gospel and save the people.

Any Christian can declare and demonstrate the gospel. Even those who have not attained enough knowledge, and even those who have not learned to heal the sick and work other miracles, can still do their part to advance the doctrines of faith. Now if you have never healed the sick in the name of Jesus, there is no need to wait. When an opportunity arises, simply obey the word of God. Do not shortchange yourself. But for now I wish to bring up something even more basic, and that is to let the Bible do its own work. If you have the Bible, then there is always something you can do. No matter how untrained you are, and no matter how timid you are, there is something you can do. If you think you are too inarticulate to preach, and if you think you are too weak in faith to heal the sick and cast out demons -- these are excuses -- or if somehow you lack the opportunity, if you have the Bible, you can do something.

Let the Bible do its work by making people read it. If for whatever reason you can do nothing else, you can always do this. Make them read about the God of signs and wonders. Make them read about Jesus' promises and commands that ensure the increase of miracles by all his followers, all those who have faith in him. Make them read about the teachings and examples of those who in the early days obeyed the Lord and achieved results, receiving visions and prophecies, healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. If for some reason you cannot teach the Bible, or if you cannot carry on a debate

about it, and if for some reason you have no opportunity to demonstrate by healing the sick or performing other signs and wonders, then make the people read the Bible. Just read it.

Here is what you can expect from this. Consider the parable of the sower. The seed is the word of God. Some people hear the word of God but fail to grasp it, and so the devil comes and steals it from their hearts. Some appear to receive the word of God with joy, but they only believe until they run into circumstances that trouble them. Then some hear the word of God, but they are taken up with the life of the world, and the truth does not bear fruit in their lives. Accept the fact that not every person will believe, and among those who claim to believe, not every person will produce results. However, the good news is that there are some people who will hear the word of God and understand it, and they will put the word of God into action, producing a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown into their hearts. This is what you can expect when you make people read what the Bible says about miraculous powers and experiences.

We have seen someone who has a nagging doubt. What happens there? A recurring thought persists in his mind and harasses him. The thought has been planted in his mind, and because it has not been eradicated, it grows and begins to choke out other thoughts. But the reverse can also happen. The word of God is able to produce nagging faith in a person. He thinks that his unbelief is correct, but the Bible teaches something different. If this is planted in his heart and not uprooted, it will increase and compete against his unbelief. As it is written, "God gives the increase." He is able to overturn a person's stronghold of unbelief, starting with a seed.

Make people read the Bible. Literacy is devastating for cessationism and other forms of unbelief. The cessationist can say anything he wants, and some people will believe him, but as long as people can read for themselves, they will see that the Bible says something different. They will see that the cessationist is a teacher of unbelief, a messenger of Satan who introduces a non-Christian religion to the people. They will see that their preachers and theologians have lied to them. Their false doctrines function to divert attention from their own failure and wickedness. Make them read the Bible. As long as people can read, cessationism can never win.