

# CONTRACT

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# 1. OUR CONTRACT WITH GOD

## Contract

A covenant is a contract. This statement should not be controversial, but I have seen a few objections to it. "Contract" is a broad word. There are contracts that entail serious commitments and severe consequences, and there are contracts that are trivial in comparison. In fact, the word "covenant" is also broad, and it can refer to anything from an apartment rental to an eternal bond. So a covenant is a contract, and a contract is a covenant. The word "contract" can accommodate any meaning that the word "covenant" intends to convey. To ascertain what kind of contract it is, we need to examine the terms of the contract, or what the contract says. If we wish to restrict the meaning of "covenant" in the context of theology, we may say that it is a specific kind of contract. In any case, "contract" is a broad word, and whether we say "contract" or "covenant," it is not meaningful enough until we know the terms of the contract.

One theologian makes the objection that the word "contract" is too weak. Again, the word itself is broad. The terms of the contract can be strong, and the way it is made can be very graphic. Suppose someone forms a contract with the devil. Even without knowing the terms of the contract, the notion is immediately jarring. The nature of the contract partner makes the contract notable. Let us use a seemingly weaker word, and say "agreement" instead. Let us make it even weaker, and say "understanding." If someone has an "understanding" with the devil, we would still not think it is weak, would we? Would this theologian think that it is trivial to make a contract with the devil? We would regard it as something horrid, perhaps the worst thing that a human being can do. A person who makes a contract with the devil commits himself to wickedness and damnation. But what if a person makes a contract with God? You see, it is not that the word "contract" is weak, but it is because people have become insensitive to the notion of God. To them, the devil is a more colorful character. Like others of his kind, this theologian is more invested in his academic obsession with "covenant" than with God himself. The word "contract" is broad. How strong it is depends on the terms of the contract, how it is made, and with whom it is made.

Righteousness is intelligible in itself. We can understand light without darkness, and we can understand love without hate. However, do not be alarmed that we could use something from the realm of evil to illustrate our point. As Paul said to the Corinthians, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols." A contract with the devil is in reality an imitation of a contract with God. Men who are bent toward evil make agreements with the devil in exchange for their souls, so that they may obtain power, money, or things that they consider advantages over others. This is a counterfeit and a perversion of God's way of doing things. God offers his contract for assurance, but Satan offers his contract to enslave and destroy people. People are born sinners, and they encounter wickedness first. When they come into the realm of faith, we can use their former life to tell them, "Remember this? It was a perversion of what God had instituted, and Satan offered it to you in order to deceive and destroy you. Now you can receive the genuine and the perfect through Jesus Christ." This approach also enables us to communicate with the members of self-proclaimed orthodoxy who, because of their unbelief, worldliness, and man-made

doctrines and traditions, usually have a strong affinity to the things of Satan and no sensitivity to the things of God. Theologians who teach about the covenant often cheapen it into something even less than a demonic covenant, but our covenant with God is stronger than any occult agreement, just as God is stronger than Satan. In our covenant, there is no deception, but only blessing and assurance.

Another objection is that a contract implies negotiation and agreement, and this appears to undermine the sovereignty of God. A covenant between God and men is not seen as an agreement between equal parties, but it is like one between a suzerain and a vassal, in which the greater promises his support and protection, while he imposes his terms upon the lesser. However, this is still a contract. The word "contract" can accommodate all of this, because the word is broad, and we only need to specify what kind of contract we have in mind. Even the word "covenant" does not necessarily refer to this kind of contract between a suzerain and a vassal, and we would still need to specify what kind of covenant we have in mind. For example, a covenant of marriage is not one between a suzerain and a vassal, but it is still called a covenant. Just throwing the word "covenant" around does not really do anything, until you describe what is in the covenant. Theologians are foolish to attach pious implications to the word "covenant" itself. Whether we use the word "covenant" or "contract" in discussing our relationship with God, we would never reduce it to the level of a human covenant or contract, so there is no point to the objection.

Moreover, this traditional assumption about the covenant as one that is between a suzerain and a vassal is not entirely applicable. Christians have a covenant with God through a chief and mediator, Jesus Christ, and Christ is not a mere vassal. As Scripture says, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" When God addresses our covenant head, it is God speaking to God. This is basic Christology and Soteriology. How can self-proclaimed experts in the covenant do not grasp this painfully obvious point? Their incompetence boggles the mind. Then they talk about "covenant theology" as if they own the thing. Huh.

Although you may have never heard of these objections, I wanted to mention them to make us think about these issues, that we have a covenant with God, and that this means we have a contract with him. There are reasons to use the word "contract." The pious obsession with the mere word or idea of "covenant" is counterproductive, and it often becomes a substitute for a true understanding of the nature and content of the covenant. Most people who are very taken up with "covenant" play around with it academically and religiously, but they do not know what it means, and they do not benefit from the covenant. The word has been so overused, and used only for theoretical and heuristic purposes, that it has been drained of life. On the other hand, although the word "contract" is more common in everyday speech, when used in a spiritual context, it is vivid, graphic, even jarring. This is what we need to remind us that the covenant is a contract, and it is supposed to evoke a sense of action and power. It is supposed to define entire peoples and realms. The word "covenant" is biblical and accurate, but so is the word "contract," and sometimes it helps to use a similar word, in order to remind us what it is that we are talking about.

## **Ritualism**

Some theologians consider the covenant so crucial that they call their system "covenant theology," but their doctrine of the covenant deviates from the biblical doctrine on numerous points. In fact, their overall theology is often blatantly against what the biblical covenant guarantees to God's people. This makes them enemies of the covenant. The covenant is a pillar in their theology, but their theology consists of a combination of several biblical ideas and many man-made beliefs and traditions. The covenant is an academic device to them. It functions as a principle or framework for them to facilitate the interpretation of Scripture and the formulation of doctrines, especially their own biases. For example, they would apply the covenant to theories about water baptism. They would leverage their claims about the covenant to argue for what they wish to conclude about baptism. However, they still end up with a defective doctrine, and their baptism has no effect. It remains a mere ritual. They are not doers of the word of God. They preach about the covenant, but they live as people without a covenant. They would refer to it as something strong in principle, but they would restrict its effects and benefits, and they would live as if it is something immaterial. They would preach about their adoption, but they live as orphans.

Their focus on rituals that are supposedly associated with the covenant, such as baptism and communion, becomes an excuse to reject faith and obedience toward the covenant. Like the Jews whose zeal toward man-made tradition, circumcision, and the Sabbath obscured their defiance against the weightier laws of God on faith, mercy, and justice, the defenders of historic orthodoxy use their zeal toward rituals to make an outward display of piety, when on the inside they are full of unbelief, malice, and death. If someone makes a commotion about the exact shape and weight and color and price and flavor of the tiny crackers used for communion, he might impress unspiritual people into thinking that he really cares about God, and no one will notice that he is an unbeliever who commits adultery and embezzles funds. If he debates everybody – from his pastor to his friends to his mother to his dog, and then other people's pastors and friends and mothers and dogs – about the correct age and height and weight and smell and race and lineage of a candidate for water baptism, and whether it is done by sprinkling or immersion, and if by sprinkling, on how many drops of filtered or unfiltered water to be sprinkled by washed or unwashed hands, and if hands that are washed by soap then whether with or without disinfectant or coloring, and if by immersion, on what kind of robe he needs to use, if any, on whether he should wear underwear, on how many seconds the person needs to remain under water, on whether he needs to show the first signs of drowning to display his dedication, and a hundred of other things, then he might deceive people into thinking that he is truly concerned about obedience to the gospel, and no one will notice that he never heals the sick and casts out demons, because he does not have even the smallest faith for the things demonstrated by some believers who would begin to do them on the first day of their conversion.

They argue about the smallest details, and if they are not small enough, they will invent even smaller problems to argue about, so that amidst the chaos they may shove God entirely out of the picture. Jesus said that these people would strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. They would incite a worldwide controversy about how many grams of sugar God permits

you to put into your coffee, and whether the amount is different on the Sabbath, so that no one would notice when they commit murder in broad daylight by undermining those who lay hands on the sick in the name of Jesus. They do not care about God and the gospel, but they want people to think that they care about these things. This is the way of the religious hypocrites, and churches and seminaries are overflowing with them. People like these are widespread and numerous, not rare exceptions. God prefers mercy, not sacrifice. He loves faith, not rituals. If someone has no faith for things like miracles of healing, but he seems zealous for rituals like baptism and communion, then we must conclude that his zeal is false, and he is putting up a performance to distract other people, perhaps even to distract his own conscience, from his lack of piety and lack of faith. Christians who continue to exalt people like these perpetuate this kind of behavior, and become complicit in the unbelief and hypocrisy. Instead of making them into religious celebrities, people like these must be condemned and despised.

Ritualism is the religion of the flesh. It will appear wherever people prefer control and appearance rather than faith, mercy, and justice. If it is not eradicated from the heart, one might slip back into it. Thus in recent years, some of those who have supported the ministry of healing began to introduce it under the umbrella of baptism and communion. This supposedly offers people a way to receive things that are available to them through rituals that remind them of what Christ has done for them, but in reality it makes people turn from Jesus Christ and God's word to fleshly activities and material substances. It diverts their faith away from the proper objects. It makes them jump through more hoops to attain what they could easily experience by faith alone, without the use of any ceremony or substance. Presenting healing under baptism and communion would attract much interest, because carnal people prefer ritual over faith, but such an approach disguises and even honors a religion of the flesh. Would the people receive healing? If there is any faith remaining toward the word of God, although it has been sidelined, then some of the people would still receive, perhaps even many of them – it is easy for miracles of healing to happen – but the credit then goes toward the rituals, confirming the people in this religion of the flesh. This would make it increasingly difficult for the people to receive healing and other things from God in the long run, because it exalts the flesh and diminishes faith. Thus in the guise of honoring the work of Christ, this approach does a disservice to the gospel. It dooms those it claims to help.

The people have a grotesque obsession with the idea of covenant, but this does not lead them to a correct doctrine of the covenant, and it does not lead them to live according to the covenant. We will not be like this. We will take this sacred contract as God teaches it to us, and it will have spiritual and material effects in our lives. This contract with God determines our identity, our focus, our destiny, our health, our wealth, our confidence, our relationships, and everything in our lives. Jesus said that a descendant of Abraham ought to be free from her sickness, and he said that the miracle of healing is as an ordinary meal to the children of the covenant. Many people use the covenant to argue about the how and the when and the who of water baptism, or some such thing, but then the covenant never becomes a vital power in their lives. For all their talk about baptism, water baptism does nothing in their lives. Their actual baptism is in how the incessant discussions and controversies wash over them and cleanse them from an awareness of how spiritually

feeble and useless they are. If we understand water baptism correctly, then we will see it as a mere symbol of the cleansing of our conscience and the resurrection of our spirits. It can only reflect a reality that happens by faith in Jesus alone with or without the baptism. We will look to the reality instead of the symbol. We will never preach as if we are sinners again. We will have such confidence, and we will feel so right before God and the world, that we will chase away cancer with a wave of the hand. The water and the ritual can never do this, and for most people who are obsessed with baptism, water and ritual are all that they have. Faith in the contract is what enables us to live in the reality of it.

## **Romance**

There are many things that we can say about the terms of the contract, but one statement deserves special attention. God said, "I shall be their God, and they shall be my people." He confirmed this by a contract. He will be our God forever, and forever, we will be his people. We are not alone in life. We have a contract with God. No one can tear us apart. No thing can separate us from his love. No power can prevent him from saving us, healing us, blessing us. God is for us. We are for God. This is an unbreakable relationship. An unbreakable commitment. We have a contract with Deity. The only God. The Supreme Spirit. The All-Wisdom. The All-Power. We consider the notion of signing a contract with the devil as grotesque, even though it could secure tremendous strength, wealth, and power to dominate. Do we think that a contract with God is less life-changing? Why, it ought to upset the balance of the world. If a contract with Satan is the basis for ultimate wickedness and devastation, a contract with God is much more the basis for ultimate power, ultimate healing, ultimate prosperity, ultimate blessing and righteousness. In a blood contract, Deity pledges all his resources to the Christian, and the Christian pledges all his trust and service.

God said, "I shall be their God, and they shall be my people." We don't have another God. We don't have another one to care for us, to defend us, to bless us, to heal us, to prosper us, and to guide us. Satan wishes to weaken us through counterfeit piety by convincing us that although we should render all our powers to serve God, we should not expect him to supply all his riches to us, because that would be selfish, unspiritual, man-centered, or some such thing. This is absurd, and it goes against what it means to have a contract with God. He said, "I shall be their God, and they shall be my people." He is our God. He is the only God, and our only God. When we want something, if we do not expect it from God, who are we supposed to get it from? Are we supposed to get it from Satan? Our contract is with God, not with the devil. Are we supposed to get it by ourselves? But to strive by the strength of the flesh is the very model of carnality and man-centered religion. We see people who speak against expecting healing and prosperity from God, and then they strive for these same things by their own strength. They act as if they have no God, and no contract with him. But he is our God. If we are going to worship anyone, we will worship him. If we are going to pray to anyone, we will pray to him. If we will obtain any salvation and happiness, and any health and wealth, we will go to him. This is true piety, when we act like he is God.

Look at this from the other perspective. We are his people. If he is not going to bless us, who is he going to bless? If he is not going to heal us, who is he going to heal? If he is not



going to make us rich, who is he going to make rich? As it is written, "The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it." Why does the Bible contain this statement and hundreds of others like it? Has man-centered theology infiltrated Scripture, or is traditional religious thinking total rubbish? The orthodoxy of man has made God into a heretic. There is a vast difference between a contract with Satan that brings wealth, and a contract with God that brings wealth. Wealth from Satan is a trap, but wealth from God is a gift. We are his people. If he is not going to fill us with his power, what is he going to do with it? If he will not let us experience his gifts and miracles, why talk about them in the Bible? We are his people. We are his treasure. He wanted the contract. He dictated the terms. He decided that it would be this way. He is not reluctant. He is eager to fulfill it. No one cheated him. No one manipulated him. We did not force ourselves upon him. He is the one who said, "I shall be their God, and they shall be my people." Will he lavish all his riches and powers on his enemies? Never! If he is going to provide the things that we see on this earth, we are the ones who will obtain them. If he is going to do good to anyone, we are the ones who will benefit. If he is going to do the things that he says in his word, then we are the ones who will receive the fulfillment. We are his people.

A formal contract does not necessarily hinder romance and intimacy in a relationship. Certainly, it does not replace love, because it is out of love that God established the contract with us, and we know that he loves us because he offers us this contract of salvation and blessing. The contract is a revelation of his love. Marriage is also a contract. It does not stifle love but rather ensures its unfettered development. The man offers the woman a formal vow, holding nothing back. The woman offers the man a formal vow, holding nothing back. The two vow to enter into an exclusive relationship and renounce all others. It gives the relationship a permanent basis. Success is guaranteed as long as the two remain true to the contract. Likewise, our relationship with God is not a casual friendship or a temporary alliance, but it is defined and secured by an eternal contract, signed by the blood of Jesus. Both sides declare the intention to invest everything into the relationship, forever. Far from stifling love, romance, and intimacy, our contract with God provides assurance, protection, and makes room for limitless growth and fellowship.

Why did God contractually commit himself to us? Why did he make a formal declaration, signed in blood, to save, to heal, to guide, to protect, and to prosper his people? He is God, and he can do whatever he wants. Why doesn't he just do good things for us whenever he feels like it? Couldn't he accomplish the same things without a covenant? He wants to give us a consistent basis for faith. It is true that the will of God is easy to discern. Even without a formal contract, it is still possible to know what we can expect from God. As we fellowship with him, and as he reveals himself to us, we would come to know his abilities and tendencies. We would, for example, understand that he is a God who forgives our sins and heals the sick. However, without a contract, it leaves room for us to think that he would decide what happens on a case-by-case basis, and we would not know what he decides until it happens. But God wants us to be sure what he would do as we come to him. He doesn't want us to approach him with a hit-or-miss attitude. He doesn't want us to think of prayer as a gamble, as a rolling of the dice. As the Bible says, "He who comes to God must believe that he exists, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." He wants us to know that he will surely reward, instead of thinking that he will possibly reward, but might

not. He wants us to be sure about what he would do, and to instantly reach that place of certainty. Any new believer from a culture of blood covenants, if we can convince him that the Supreme Spirit has indeed offered him a contract, could bypass centuries of fruitless theological gibberish and reach the place of total certainty in less than one second. He would be frighteningly powerful. He would be unstoppable. He would be a monster of faith.

God wants to relate to us through faith, and the stronger the faith, the better. Certainty is good. Faith is strong where there is a consistent foundation, a basis for confidence. As the Bible says, "For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, 'Surely I will bless you and multiply you.' And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." God had made a promise to Abraham. He would have fulfilled it if there was nothing more, but he confirmed it with an oath. Why? "To show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose." He made a promise, so of course he intended what he had promised, or he would not have made the promise. But he added an oath to show more convincingly that he meant what he said. This is intended to convince us that we would inherit this promise, and God would do this for us and see it through. The text calls it an "anchor of the soul." This is what we mean. Our contract with God is our anchor. If we will devote our thoughts on this sacred contract, our faith will be immovable. We will not say one thing today, and something else tomorrow. We will not act one way this week, and a different way next week.

Return to the marriage covenant. The man and the woman decide to commit themselves to each other. They express the intention, but also seal it with a formal contract. Now they are free to invest all that they have and all that they are into this relationship. When they receive a blessing, the husband never has to wonder if the wife would share it with him. They belong to each other. When they face a decision, the wife never has to wonder if the husband will put her first. Even the children are secondary, because this covenant is made with the spouse, and only the spouse. Parents, children, friends, and even brothers and sisters in Christ have no part in this covenant. They have committed themselves to each other. When one has love to give, he or she never has to worry if it would be wasted. The contract carves out an exclusive place for the two of them out of all the relationships in the world, and within this space, love is developed and reciprocated. When there is a conflict, or something that could challenge the harmony, there is no chance that the marriage would be terminated, and that the two will walk their separate ways. The contract is permanent. It is a guarantee, an anchor of the soul. Even when negative feelings flare up, the contract is unaffected, and the two are anchored in place to resolve their problems within the context

of the covenant. There is no going in and out of it. The contract becomes their entire world. Of course, this assumes that the two understand the contract of marriage and respect it the way they should. This is often not the case, because people are sinful and ignorant, and because the church has invented loopholes to supposedly dissolve the marriage covenant, but in reality throw all the people involved into the sin of adultery. However, those who have been born again into the family of God and taught the sacred contract we have with God will also apply the same principles to the covenant of marriage. The covenant of marriage is made more sure when it is established and understood under the covenant we have with God.

The things we have said regarding the covenant of marriage illustrate the covenant we have with God. We never have to wonder if God will share his resources with us. We never have to wonder if he will put us first. He who did not spare his own Son, but offered him up to save us, will he not also freely give us all things? We never have to worry if his love will be wasted on us, or if our love will be wasted on him. We never need to think that this thing or that thing will tear us apart, and cause us to walk our separate ways. It is written that nothing will separate us from the love of God. Even when there are problems to resolve, it is nobody's business but ours. We will always resolve our problems with God, because the relationship is guaranteed by formal contract. We are in our own world with God. We have no one else to be our God, and he has no one else to be his people. This contract remains intact regardless of emotions and feelings, regardless of circumstances, regardless of momentary confusion, regardless of our performance. You say, "God is faithful, but we are weak. Doesn't this mean that the covenant could be destroyed because of our failures?" However, the covenant is made between God and the Seed, not seeds as in many, but seed, as in Christ, and we become members of the covenant in Christ. As the God-man, Christ will never fail, and thus he guarantees our side of the covenant. The contract keeps our mind stable in the face of turbulence and opposition, and in the face of inciting words from our enemies intended to cause division. It maintains our priorities also in the midst of happiness and abundance, so that we will never forget God, just as he will never forget about us. He does not need a contract to keep him honest, but it is given for our sake. Our contract with God is an anchor of the soul. We are bold and happy to throw ourselves into this faith and this relationship.

## **Status**

A covenant brings two parties into a special relationship, but by doing this, it also draws a line that excludes everyone else, and defines everyone not in this relationship as an outsider. It divides the whole world into two groups. This covenant confers a formal status on an insider to face those who are outside of this relationship. The person becomes an ambassador of the covenant. Again, take marriage as an example. Once a woman marries a man, she receives formal status as the wife of that man. She is no longer just an acquaintance or a friend, but a member of this new family unit. She is authorized to present herself as a member of the family, whether she is addressing individuals, groups, the government, or God. She is authorized to act in the name of the family, to sign documents, to accept or reject offers, and to perform many functions proper to her status. She also has the power to inherit the resources of her family. Of course, this is also true for the man,

who by marriage has become a member of the new family unit. A covenant is not only a formal declaration of who we are to each other, but also a formal declaration of this relationship to outsiders. A married person has a formal basis to reject all suitors, in addition to any personal reasons. All of this is true when we have a covenant with God. We have a formal status as his children. We are the ambassadors of Christ. We are agents of the kingdom of God.

This formal status is fundamental to the work of the gospel. For who are we to speak for God? But we have a covenant with God. A wife has the right to speak for her husband, and a husband has the right to speak for his wife. So it is with our contract with God. We are insiders of his kingdom. We have the commission to declare God's message to the world. The covenant confers upon us the authority to challenge outsiders in the name of God. We have the authority to rebuke them for their sins, to expose their errors and delusions, and to command them to repent. We have the authority to invite them to leave their current condition and enter into a contract with God. A stranger or even a friend would not have the authority to invite someone into my home, but a covenant partner who has a formal status with me would have that right. We can say to someone, "I come to you with a message from my contracted Master and Father. I am authorized to inform you that if you will turn from your sins and follow Jesus Christ, you will be welcomed into the family of God." We have the authority to speak for our God. We have the authority to even guarantee membership in the family to someone who would comply. We are not simply pets, but we are his contract partners. We are authorized to declare his terms to the world.

A contract creates a world of its own. Regardless of what the rules are on the outside, a contract defines its own rules. A stranger has no right to take from your possessions whenever he wishes. He would get something from you only when you sovereignly offer him something, probably on a case-by-case basis. But if you sign a formal document stating that he has a right to take from you whatever he wants, and whenever he wants, that would be a contract. Now this person is no longer a stranger like any other outsider, but he is an insider to a contract that you have with him. It is a special relationship, and he has a formal status. The rules that apply to everyone else no longer apply to him. He lives by a different set of rules. He might continue to live as one without a contract, and fail to take advantage of what he has a right to receive, but he could walk by this different set of rules at any time just by acting on the terms of the contract. The contract creates a world of its own. Now he is still in the world, but he is not of the world.

### **Guarantee**

All of this is true by the very definition of covenant, but I have never seen it explained like this, not even by those who are familiar with the operations of faith and power. The ones who present themselves as experts in the theology of the covenant are usually the ones who know the least about the covenant from this perspective. Their theology is usually the most contrary to what it means to have a covenant. To use marriage as an example again, whenever my wife asks for me she does not have to wonder if I would support her in that instance. Whenever we meet someone she does not have to wonder if I would prefer him or her over my wife this time. The act of forming the marriage covenant meant that, by this

one motion, I had decided how I would treat her in every case in the future. If I had intended that I would decide how to treat her on a case-by-case basis, or on a day-by-day basis, I would not have formed the covenant, because it would be meaningless, and in fact there would be no actual covenant. It would be a contract that carries no terms, no conditions, and no promises. There would be no contract. So-called "covenant theology" has without exception affirmed the covenant on the one hand (nevertheless, only an academic and heuristic, man-made version), and in the very next breath nullified it by their false application of the sovereignty of God, as if God continues to decide on a case-by-case basis regardless of what the covenant says. The result is that "covenant theology" is the least covenantal of any account of the theology of the covenant, because the outcome is the destruction of the covenant.

The very point of a contract is to prevent decisions to be made on a case-by-case basis. The very reason for it is to declare the will of each party for future events. There is no need for a contract if one can discover the will of another only by observing what the other person does in each instance. By definition, a contract guarantees that one would know what the other person will do before he does it. From this perspective, even the "pinky promise" doctrine from children is far superior to the covenant theology of the creeds and scholars. Children know what a promise means. Even children know that to decide on a case-by-case basis after a promise has been made does not make one the honorable sovereign, but a LIAR – pants on fire. A theology of covenant that uses divine sovereignty as an excuse to nullify the covenant makes God into a liar. The trash-grade preachers and theologians ought to be embarrassed to be associated with the term, because their theology exposes the fact that they have no covenant, that they do not believe they have a covenant, and that they do not live as if they have a covenant.

Ask some kids what a pinky promise means. There used to be some of them that took it more seriously and cut their fingers as they made the promise. There is your covenant. You have instantly gained more useful understanding than the combination of multiple streams of "covenant theology" developed over multiple centuries. Now imagine God made such a pact with you, promising you diplomatic status, endless and divine life, supernatural insights and powers, and all his resources both in this life and in the life to come, only that instead of cutting his little finger, he cut up his own Son. He made his Son into a man and drained all his blood as he made this oath to you. There is your gospel. And then the "covenant" theologian tells you, "Well...you know...he might not answer this prayer because he is sovereign." What?! Then why did he write the contract?! Wasn't he sovereign when he signed it? No one forced him. If he was going to decide on what he would do on a case-by-case basis, such as your protection and happiness in this life, or your healing and prosperity, he could have done it without all this trouble, without all this bloodshed. We would be in that exact situation without the covenant.

The so-called "covenant theology" that exploits divine sovereignty to destroy the element of covenantal guarantee blasphemes the blood of Christ. It is the greatest enemy to the covenant, because it portrays the whole thing as fraudulent and meaningless. Cults that teach cessationism, that undermine God's promises regarding faith, prayer, healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, prosperity, the baptism of the Spirit for supernatural

endowments, and that undermine his promises regarding various miracles whether with or without the gifts of the Spirit, all fall under this condemnation. They are always saying covenant this or covenant that, but there is never any covenant remaining by the time they are finished. Covenant theology? Where is the world-shaking ministry of healing the sick and casting out demons? That is covenant theology. Covenant apologetics? Where is the spirit of prophecy, by which the defender of the faith can form arguments he has never learned as well as expose the secrets of those who resist? That is covenant apologetics. But their teachings oppose these things and a thousand others that are in the contract.

They are enemies of the covenant, because they insinuate themselves into the family in order to spread suspicion within the household about the contract, even portraying the Father as a sovereign covenant-breaker – much inferior to a child who remembers his "pinky promise" to a friend. They pretend to be uncles and tutors in the family, but in reality they are deviants that molest our babies with their propaganda. They are religious predators. Their writings are demonic literature. Their classrooms are prisons. Their churches are dungeons of perversion. Scoundrels like these must be disowned by the family and condemned with the most bitter curses. Under Moses, these people should have been executed, but they have many followers in our churches who prefer them instead of the word of God. Church members worship them as doctors and reverends, but what will they do when judgment comes? Unbelief will end in violence and damnation. As the Scripture says, "An appalling, horrible thing has taken place in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own authority. My people love it like this. But what will you do at the end of it?"

## **Reality**

Our contract with God creates a world of its own. The effects are more powerful than any human contract. A human contract indeed creates a world within a world, but its rules are still limited to the same possibilities, only they make a specific application of these possibilities. On the other hand, a contract with God creates a world of its own under God, so that the terms of this contract make an application of God's possibilities. Thus our contract with God overrides even the rules of physics, biology, sin and death – the spiritual and natural laws that apply to outsiders. We live by a different set of rules. For the outsiders, when there is a drought, the crops die. This is natural law. But because we have a contract with God, we can have the greatest harvest in the middle of the gravest famine. We hear about the spread of diseases, but our contract states that Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses, so we walk in the law of life instead of the law of death. For the outsiders, when a disease spreads in the world, then a disease results in their bodies. This does not have to be true for us. We can even heal the sick by merely touching them or speaking to them. The unbeliever has no such law in their physics and biology.

The law of spirit and life has set us free from the law of sin and death. The unbelievers live in the law of sin and death. They are constantly suffering the effects of sin, constantly in the process of decay. The longer they live, the worse they become. The effects of sin continue to erode them, resulting in sickness, poverty, fear, hatred, immorality, and the like. They become sad and bitter, and full of regrets. We don't have to live like that. We

can live by a different law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The longer we live, the better, stronger, younger, wiser, richer, happier we become. We live in a different reality. We are in this world, but not of this world. We occupy the same physical space, but we live by a different set of rules. Thus we think about reality differently. This is what it means to have faith.

Most people who talk about the covenant make it into an academic thing only. It is a mere heuristic principle in their worldview. It is nothing more than a framework for them to interpret the Bible or to formulate their theology. It's all talk, talk, talk. And they don't even talk about it correctly. They do not talk about the contract as if it is truly a contract. They don't expect God to do anything on the basis of the covenant. Or, they claim that God would only do "spiritual" things, because this allows them to hide the fact that they are not members of the covenant, so that God does nothing for them. They don't invoke the sacred contract to demand dramatic effects and advances in their lives. If the divine contract is what it says it is, then you have the right to raise your hand toward heaven and declare, "By the contract that I have with God through Jesus Christ, I command sickness to depart." And demons and diseases must scurry away from you.

Christians have reduced the covenant into a mere framework to organize their theology. This is a disgrace. The heathens possess a superior understanding. The secular movies that depict a contract with the devil provide a more accurate picture of the covenant than the covenant theology in Christian literature. A man makes a contract with the devil to obtain supernatural powers, charisma, wealth, immunity to diseases and injuries, and many other things in exchange for his soul. But a contract with God is all talk? A contract signed in divine blood offers only spiritual and hidden benefits? Or if it does anything at all, it makes you sicker, poorer, sadder, and more self-righteous. What morons would believe this, except Christians? It is a contract with an actual Being, Person, and Intelligence. The Christian faith is a blood agreement with Power. And by the Scriptures he has revealed to us what he can do and what he likes to do.

He has declared that he enjoys overwhelming people with his healing, his prosperity, his success, his favor, his victory, his wisdom, his supernatural and superhuman abilities, and thousands of other benefits, as many as he has demonstrated throughout history, and he wishes to do even greater works than these in our lives. Scripture declares that he wishes to open the windows of heaven to shower us with more blessings and riches than we have room to contain. It says that he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies, and my cup overflows. As I humble myself under the mighty hand of God, the Bible says that he will exalt me at the perfect time. It does not say that he will exalt himself, but me. What kind of man-centered theology is this? This is true covenant theology. We are dealing with this kind of a Being. We have a blood contract with this kind of a Person. We must expect these things in our lives. The will of God is salvation, creating a new and super race of humanity. The will of God is healing. The will of God is prosperity. The will of God is power, wisdom, favor, success, victory, happiness, and all the wonderful things that he has done and has promised to do for his people. Our contract with God is greater than any contract with the devil. Yet many claim to be Christians, but live as people without a

contract. We refuse to be like this. We shall damn them all to hell in the name of the covenant before we surrender an inch to their garbage theology.

### **Invocation**

"I will be their God, and they shall be my people." We have a contract with God. Since this is the case, God has a contractual right to approach us at any time to make demands on us. This is what it means to have such a contract. This is admitted without hesitation, but the reverse is also true. We have a contractual right to approach God at any time to make demands on him. Jesus said this in various ways to his disciples, repeating the teaching again and again. He said that if we would remain in him, or if we would ask in his name, then we could ask for whatever is our will, and it would be done for us, or given to us. Fake piety considers this teaching of Jesus the height of irreverence, but God is the one who made the contract. This is what it means to have a covenant. If we do not believe that we can approach him like this, then we do not believe that he can approach us like this either. If we do not take it for granted that we can approach God with such boldness on the basis of the contract, then we do not believe that God can approach us like this on the basis of the contract. The Bible says that he is an ever-present help, and it says that we can come with boldness to the throne of grace to obtain from him. Any theology that does not affirm this reciprocity of access and obligation that God himself has sovereignly written into the contract is anti-covenant theology. Seemingly without exception, this is the true face of covenantal theology, covenantal philosophy, covenantal apologetics, covenantal hermeneutics, covenantal worship, covenantal counseling, covenantal discipleship, covenantal parenting, and covenantal everything else. It is phony, and a thoroughly anti-covenant culture.

There is no need to wait for God to decide whether he would help you on a case-by-case basis. There are people like that. They call themselves Christians and they think that they are deferring to the sovereignty of God. The truth is that they are living as people without a covenant. However, since there is indeed a covenant, to live as people without a covenant would mean that they reject the covenant or that they are outsiders of the covenant, that they are unbelievers. If God decides whether to help on a case-by-case basis, it would mean that he does not decide on the basis of a covenant or on a contractual basis. And this would either mean that God himself breaks the covenant, or that he addresses people who are not in the covenant. But those people who are obsessed with talking about the covenant still relate to God as if he decides on a case-by-case basis. They still live as those who are without God and without hope in this world. Their biggest boast is in reality their weakest point. Their theology is blasphemy. It implies that God disregards a covenant that he himself decided to establish. But God is not a liar.

We have a contract with God, signed by the blood of Jesus. He was the one who decided to sign the contract with us. If he had wanted to decide on a case-by-case basis, he would not have signed a contract. But he did sign a contract. This is why you can come to him with boldness and certainty. He could have left you to approach him each time without any rights, but he has given you rights to approach him whenever you wish. Consider Esther, who approached the king without any guarantee. At that time, when a person approached



the king without being summoned, he would be put to death, except when the king reached out to him with his golden scepter. The king would decide on a case-by-case basis. What if the king issues a decree, a guarantee that a person may approach the throne whenever he wants? Then there would be no danger, no punishment, and no hesitation. Then there would be only eagerness and confidence to approach. There would be only an expectation to receive. He has free access to the king! It would be the end of all his problems. This is what God has given us in our contract with him. You do not have to wonder. He already signed the contract. You do not have to persuade him. He already persuaded himself. There is no hesitation. You are already accepted. He has decided to give you what you want.

He is our God. We are his people. We can come to him and say, "We invoke the contract that we have with you in Christ. We claim the benefits of redemption." We do not manipulate God by this faith, since he is the source of this faith. He is the one who has decided to give us what is our will to ask in the name of Jesus. He never needed to enter into a contract with us. He initiated it so that he could give us a guarantee, a guarantee as an anchor for our faith, so that we would have a formal basis to believe that he would answer us when we call, that we could speak his message, and that we could act in his name. He wanted this. What we have with him is not a casual fling, but an everlasting contract. It is a forever faith.

## **2. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SELF**

A strong sense of self is one of the most powerful assets in your spiritual life. It can be the deciding factor in whether your spirit is weak or strong. Satan has sown much deception into this area of Christian doctrine. He has convinced Christians that to have a strong sense of self, to have a strong self-image or self-esteem, or to the extent that we have any sense of the self at all, is sinful arrogance, selfishness, and self-centeredness. In the process, he has distorted many scriptures and turned them against believers. Much of Christian teaching pushes you to minimize yourself, to destroy yourself, to lose yourself. This is supposed to be spiritual. This is supposed to be the trademark of discipleship. However, this is in reality the essence of the mystical cults and eastern religions.

Satan has manipulated our theologians to destroy the self in Christians throughout church history, and this has become orthodoxy. The satanic lie is the official doctrine today. It has been a most effective method in keeping believers weak, sick, and fake. It has surely contributed to millions of cases of depression and suicide. It has also contributed to the rejection of the gospel by many people, and thus their eternal perdition. This is what is at stake in the conflict between historic orthodoxy and authentic orthodoxy. Restoring an acute and correct sense of self is one of the strongest and fastest ways to heal the soul and bring spiritual power to a Christian. It also restores the gospel as a message that saves those who believe, instead of a message that destroys them.

### **God and Self**

God is SELF in the absolute form. He has the absolute sense of self. So we will begin with him when we rethink the idea of self. God revealed himself to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM." We ask someone, "Who are you?" The person would reply, "I am John Smith. I am from England, and I am a software programmer." If the person says, "I am Jane," we would probably press, "Where are you from? And what do you do?" And she would say, "I am a writer" or "I am a surgeon." But God replied, "Who am I? I am ME. And ME IS ME. I AM is...I AM. I am that I am. I am what I am. I just...AM!" He told Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you."

God introduced himself as ME. He identified himself by himself, and in relation to himself. I AM is I AM. Of course God can be known in his actions and relations, and he often reveals himself through his actions and relations, but his basic identity is I AM. He just IS, and this is meaningful even before we consider his actions and relations. No one else is like this. No creature can possess intrinsic definition and meaning, because the fact that it is a created thing means that it is conceived and defined by the creator, so that it can find meaning only in relation to one who created it. A creature-centered definition of a creature is also a mis-definition of the creature. The definition of the essence of a created thing will always be a creator-centered definition, a God-centered definition. In other words, to truly know a created thing, we must know how it is related to the creator, or God. A self-centered definition of a created thing is different from a God-centered definition of that thing, and on its own this self-centered definition is insufficient and misleading. When a created being

insists on defining himself by himself, we call that sin, because by this the created being pretends to be God, and thus blasphemes the true God.

On the other hand, God is eternal and uncreated. He is relative only to himself, and therefore he is absolute. It is necessary that he defines himself by himself, because he is the one that defines everything, and there is nothing other or higher than himself by which he is defined. Therefore, with him God-centeredness and self-centeredness are the same. This is his unique characteristic. A creature who is self-centered in the sense that he considers himself the center of everything, and defines himself and everything else by himself, is out of touch with reality. This is because he is not the center of everything, but he is a creature, and he has definition and meaning only in relation to God. This is why we say that self-centeredness is contrary to God-centeredness, and it comes forth from sin and rebellion, and leads to more sin and rebellion, to error in doctrine, to corruption in society, and so on. However, self-centeredness is not wrong in itself – God is self-centered, and he ought to be self-centered, and for him to be self-centered is to be centered on the divine, on the good, on the worthy, and on the perfect. The issue is not self-centeredness itself, but that no creature should be self-centered in a sense that denies his relation to God.

Self-centeredness, or something related like self-awareness or self-definition, is not the same as selfishness. God is the most self-centered and self-aware person in existence, and it is right that he is, because he is indeed the center of everything, by which everything else is defined and measured. Nevertheless, although he is the most self-centered, the most self-aware, the most self-defined, he is also the least selfish, but rather the most self-sacrificing. God the Son humiliated himself by becoming a man, and divine majesty allowed himself to be nailed to a cross as a human criminal. He did this in order to maintain his own justice as he saved his people. Self-centeredness is not the same thing as selfishness. Even self-centeredness in a relative sense is not sin. We often refer to self-centeredness as if it is sin, because we usually mean a self-centeredness that rejects God as the true center. This would indeed be sin, and we will continue to refer to it as sin. Anything that we have said in other places against self-centeredness in this sense remains true. However, at this time we are discussing the topic of self from an angle unfamiliar to the teachings of human tradition. Here we refer to self-centeredness to mean an acute self-awareness or self-definition, a purposeful deliberation in how we relate to God, to what he says we are, to his commands and promises, and to other people. This kind of self-centeredness is proper and unavoidable. In fact, it is the necessary foundation of holiness.

We are also addressing the ideas of self-image and self-esteem. God knows who he is and defines who he is. He does not need other persons or things to tell him who he is. He does not need to find out about himself by comparing or measuring himself by standards external to himself. He is who he is. He is what he is. He is the highest, the best, the most wise, loving, and powerful. Therefore, he has the highest self-esteem, the highest opinion of himself. He has the highest opinion of himself because he has the correct opinion of himself. Satan has deceived Christians into thinking that it is wrong to think about our self-image or self-esteem as something important, and that it is wrong to have a high self-image or self-esteem. A person must have a self-image or self-esteem, or he would not even be a

functioning human. Rather, what is needed is an accurate self-image or self-esteem that is defined by the right standard.

## **Jesus and Self**

Jesus had a strong sense of self. He had a clear definition of himself, his identity as God, his identity as man, or the God-man, the Messiah. He had a clear sense of his relation to God the Father, and his mission from God the Father. The Bible says, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." And Jesus said that just as God had life in himself, the Son also had life in himself. Jesus knew that he himself was God. He knew that he had self-existing and self-sustaining life. The Bible says, "He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." He was not a created thing, but any thing that had been created was created through him. And he knew all of this about himself.

He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." The Jews understood him correctly, but they did not believe him, and so they tried to stone him for blasphemy. Jesus knew that he was God, and he said that he was God. The people also heard him say that he was God. He had life in himself. As the I AM he could define himself relative to himself. Nevertheless, as the Christ he was also a man, and because of this, we can look to him to show us how to act as a man. He often defined himself relative to the Father God, to his mission, to the plan of salvation, and to his people. Over and over again, he affirmed statements about himself.

He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me"; "I and the Father are one"; "He who has seen me has seen the Father"; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "I am the light of the world"; "I am the good shepherd." And he said many, many other things about himself. For our purpose, it is unnecessary to consider what he said, but the point is that he said many specific things about himself. He was very aware of the self. He thought of his self a lot, and talked about his self a lot. He made big statements about his self. People might say, "But that was Jesus." Of course he was Jesus, and this is why we must follow his example when it is something that we ought to follow. Jesus or not, it would have been wrong if his statements about himself were false. But he made true statements about himself. You cannot call yourself God, but you are not without properties, or you would not exist at all. What are some true statements about you? You should think about that, and talk about it.

Jesus had an acute awareness and definition of himself, and he repeatedly affirmed his self-image, the image of himself specified by the word of God. But when he talked to God about his mission, he was able to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but yours be done." So Jesus' self-centeredness was not the same thing as selfishness or sinfulness. Like God, he was the most self-centered person, but also the most self-sacrificing. He was without sin, but he became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. He had a strong and accurate self-image, and it was precisely because of this that he could meaningfully say, "Not my will, but yours be done." If he was nothing more than an empty shell, he would not have been self-sacrificing, because there would be no "him" or self to be counted as self-sacrificing. It was because he had a strong sense of self that he was able

to render conscious obedience to the word of God. Self does not prevent love, or worship, or any such thing. Self makes love and worship possible. The problem is with an evil self, or a false definition of the self.

### **Paul and Self**

Paul had a strong sense of self. He was God-centered. His entire life was about Jesus Christ. He was obsessed with the gospel. He was driven like a madman to save people by this message. But he talked about himself a lot. He talked about himself non-stop. He made definite and colorful statements about himself. He said he was "a servant of Jesus Christ" and "called to be an apostle" and "set apart for the gospel of God." Humility is not putting yourself down, or losing your sense of self, but it is defining yourself in relation to Christ. The more you lose your sense of self, the less you can be humble, because there would be no "you" to be humble. He called himself a "preacher" and "teacher." He said that he possessed a frightening level of authority. He said that he had an abundance of revelations. He said that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He talked about himself so much that it is difficult to select examples, lest by choosing some we would seem to neglect others.

Read his letters with this in mind, you will see that he constantly expressed an awareness of his self, an opinion on his self, and a self-image and self-esteem about himself so high that it appeared unrealistic for any ordinary human. And he would constantly speak out of his awareness of self, saying things like, "I think this," "I say this," "I did this," "God did this for me," "This happened to me," and even "I did this more than they," and so on. Didn't Paul also say that he was unworthy to be called an apostle? Right! But he spent more time than anyone else insisting that he was an apostle. He was unworthy in himself, and he knew it. He was an apostle because of the grace of God. He defined his apostleship relative to God's grace, and not relative to himself or his own merits. It is a common error to read seemingly self-deprecating phrases in the Bible and then assume they represent the whole matter, when these expressions only put down the man in himself, and not the man in Christ.

Religious tradition portrays a strong self-image as an inherent evil, but that has never been the issue. The issue has always been the correct reference point, and the honest grasp of the self relative to that reference point. God said, "I am what I am." Man was created in the image of God. Like God, man also has a self-image and a self-awareness. It would be unnatural to reject the self and lose the self, to not think about the self, to not talk about the self, or to even destroy and dissolve the self. It would be disastrous, and it is the essence of many false religions. Paul made many grand statements about himself. Like God, he also said, "I am what I am," but unlike God, he did not claim self-existence and self-sufficiency. Rather, he said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." God defined himself by himself. Paul defined himself not by himself but by God, or relative to God. So he said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." Do you see it? Paul's image of himself was strong, and he even claimed to be better than others in some ways, but this image of himself was intertwined with his image of God.

In another place, he said, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This is one of the most misused verses in the Bible. It is often given an artificially virtuous and mystical interpretation. Paul did not say, "I was crucified. I no longer exist. There is no Paul. Somebody else is writing this letter." He obviously did not mean something like this. Christians have so romanticized their distorted interpretation of the Bible's teaching that throughout church history almost all of them have failed to read this verse in its context. You do not even have to wait. Immediately after Paul said, "It is no longer I who live," he said, "The life I now live." Clearly, he continued to live. His self persisted, and he was aware of this self. Thus some translations say, "My old self has been crucified" – the context shows that he meant something like this. The previous verse says, "For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God." He did not mean a destruction of the self, or a destruction of the sense of self or the concern for the self. He meant that his self was transformed. His relationships to the world, to the law, and to God were changed. He did not "deny" his self and continued to live in misery forever, or obliterated the self into nothingness. If anything, his sense of self became much sharper.

Paul denied himself, in that his old self, the self that defined everything by the self, was a failure and was crucified with Christ. Paul continued to be Paul. He rejected the no-Christ self, and now lived the in-Christ self. That's all he meant by it. It was still the "I" who lived, but not like before. The "I" who lived according to the self, the self who pretended to be God, was the one that died. What did he say about his new situation? "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." He did not say, "I no longer live, but Christ lives." No, he said Christ lived "in me." Paul was still there. He did not say, "Christ lives in this body by himself -- there is only Christ in this body. There is no longer a person called Paul." If that were the case, then we cannot say that Paul was saved, but that he was destroyed. He did not say that Christ lived in his body by himself, but he said, "And the life I now live in the flesh" -- I live! -- "I live by faith in the Son of God." Religious tradition has romanticized and mysticized a simple idea. Christ did not live there by himself, but Paul lived by Christ. Paul was still Paul, but he had been born again. He had reoriented his whole existence upon Jesus Christ. Now his self came into sharper focus, with a more accurate definition. He became even bolder about his identity and purpose than when he was an unbeliever. All of this was centered on Christ.

### **Self-Actualization**

This is one way to verbalize the Christian teaching and experience. The traditional teaching that destroys the self also destroys this reality in Christ. The result is that this person does not live for Christ, because there is no longer a "self" to consciously do it. The irony is that this same teaching makes a person insist with much self-righteousness and indignation that he is living for Christ, precisely because he thinks he has done something destructive to his self. He becomes arrogant about his false humility. If you question him, he would fight you about it. He would fight everybody who disagrees with his teaching. With a forlorn expression and poetic language, he claims to be "broken" for Christ. If he is so broken, why

is he still there bragging about it? If he is so broken, we would not even know about it. We would not think about how broken he is, since we would not think about him at all. If he is so broken, why is he working so hard to remind us about himself, about how broken he is? According to him, shouldn't we only see Christ without him trying to convince us about how broken he is? It is all fake. What you see is heightened religious arrogance born from spiritual defeat and self-pity.

Again, the irony is that this shows that his self very much continues to exist, perhaps even his old sinful and unsaved self. I am not talking about selfishness, but self-awareness and self-definition. This is indeed self-centeredness, but not in the absolute sense. The absolute self-centeredness is the thing that brought down Adam and Eve. They tried to be like God in an absolute sense, in a sense that did away with God. Only God can say, "I AM what I AM." This is an absolute self-centeredness, a self-centeredness that has the self as its own standard and reference. But the self-centeredness that is renewed in the image of Christ says, "I AM what I AM, by the grace of God." It is a relative self-centeredness that looks to God as its standard and reference. This is when the Christian "finds" himself. This is when the Christian achieves the all-elusive "self-actualization" that the psychologists seek in vain. Why do they seek in vain? Because they seek an absolute self-actualization. They seek only what God possesses. On the other hand, when a person achieves this correct form of self-actualization – a self-actualization relative to God in Christ – his entire outlook and psyche become strong and healthy. He becomes efficient, focused, and full of power.

Someone who has sinned must indeed come to God with a broken spirit and contrite heart, but Satan has distorted these expressions and inspired Christians to mandate a state of continuous internal disrepair. Thus the person remains in spiritual uselessness, and self-pity and agony. When a person approaches God in sincere humility, God forgives him and restores him to confidence in Christ. If there is no restoration and no confidence, we can only assume that there has never been any contrition or repentance. And this is the truth. The teaching of spiritual brokenness is used not to lead sinners to righteousness, not to lead the proud to humility, but to allow hypocrites to appear righteous, and to allow the arrogant to appear humble, and the unrepentant, the unsaved, and the hard-hearted to appear spiritual, even the light of the world and the leaders of men. It is religious showmanship. If they had been broken and contrite, God would have healed them, so that they would now bring healing to others. They would do it with confidence and cheerfulness, because God had healed their hearts. There is no salvation in a religion that sees brokenness and contrition as inherently meritorious and as an end in itself, or as a continuous state of spirituality or holiness. A religion remains in this state because there is no God and no grace in it, no Christ and no salvation in it.

The traditional man-made version of Christianity has missed this simple distinction, that the self is a valid concern as long as it is not made absolute but finds the right reference point in Christ. And because it has missed this distinction, it has produced centuries of feeble, depressed, and hypocritical people. As much as they have tried to suppress and even destroy the self, it is still there, for if one truly succeeds in destroying it, there would be no more self to attack the self. It will always be there, but if you do not know what to do with it, or if you only torture it, then it is left without power and purpose. But still, it is there,

struggling and miserable. This has become the norm in Christian living for all these centuries, so much so that it is regarded as evidence of piety and humility. You are created in the image of God. You have inherited the instinct to say "I AM." But you are not God. You would be wrecked if you declare a simple "I AM" as God does. You would end up corrupt and miserable. This is the self that is in sin. This is the kind of self that must die. But God has raised you up in Christ, so that now you can say, "I AM the righteousness of God, in Christ. I am whole. I am justified. I am sanctified. I am a winner. I have purpose." This is where true happiness begins.

Paul said to the Corinthians, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ." Why wasn't he embarrassed to say this? You might say, "He was an apostle." Sure, he was an apostle, but wasn't he still a man? Indeed he was inspired to write Scripture, but he did not replace the Scripture. And he did not write Scripture to call people to have faith in himself for salvation. When he preached as an apostle, he did not preach that he died and rose again for the people, but he said that Christ did these things, and told the people to trust Christ for salvation. Yet when he talked about walking with Christ, he did not hesitate to tell others to imitate him. It was crucial that he added, "as I imitate Christ." His sense of self was centered on Christ. That was the foundation of his confidence, even his self-confidence. The foundation was not apostleship, but Christ. He instructed other people to think similarly. He said to Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young." Why didn't he say, "Don't let anyone look down on Christ"? Why did it matter what Timothy thought about himself before the people? It was important that he thought, "I can do this work of the gospel, and I can take authority in this situation. I am not going to let you look down on me because I am young." I. I. I. Me. Me. Me. Why would Paul say it like this? Paul did not want Timothy to be "broken" in front of the people, but confident, and defiant in the face of contempt and resistance. All this makes sense in the light of what we have been explaining. Christians have twisted the Bible's teaching that we ought to "deny" ourselves, when we ought to deny the old self, but embrace fully the new self that has been made in the image of Christ.

God changes people's perception about themselves. He never says, "Just don't think about yourself." He insists that people should follow his example and think about themselves, but that they should do it correctly. They ought to think about themselves in relation to him. One of the most destructive false teachings in church history is that God wants people to think worse about themselves. This is a gross distortion of the Bible's records about his interaction with human beings. Rather, God calls people to think truly about themselves, and that begins when they learn to think about themselves in relation to him -- his foreordination and his salvation in Christ. God makes people think worse about themselves when they are outside of him, but he makes people think better about themselves in him. God changes how we think about ourselves. And when we relate to him through faith in Jesus Christ, this change is always positive.

This is the answer that the psychologists have failed to find. People seem to be happier and perform better when they have a positive self-esteem, but the psychologists have no basis to urge people to think better about themselves, and so this strong self-esteem is generated by sheer force or delusion due to expedience and then placed in midair. The result is a warped sense of self, narcissism, unhappiness, and then eternal destruction. The church



reacts to this theory of the self by applying their own long-held false doctrine on the self, which amounts to saying that people ought to have either no self-esteem or low self-esteem. This is supposed to be biblical. This is supposed to be humility. The truth is that this is a doctrine of demons to keep God's people weak, arrogant, and hypocritical, and to reject their place in Jesus Christ.

## **Self-Image**

When God reveals himself to a person, he would contradict that person's pessimistic view of himself. The person's view of himself might be realistic up to that point, but when God establishes a relationship with you, he changes you, and your low self-image is no longer accurate. While Gideon was hiding from the enemies, an angel appeared and said, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor." Mary was greeted with the words, "O favored one, the Lord is with you!" And she learned to say, "From now on all generations will call me blessed." Narcissism? Arrogance? No. She was blessed because of her relation to God, and when her relation to God was revealed to her, it was then that she saw herself as God saw her.

Abram said to God, "You have given me no offspring, so a member of my household will be my heir." But God answered, "This man will not be your heir. Your very own son will be your heir." Then God told him to look at the sky and count the stars, and said in effect, "You have no offspring? You will not only have your own son as heir, but you will have many descendants. Your legacy will never end, and you will never be forgotten." He was still childless when he was ninety-nine years old. God appeared to him again and said to him, "I am God Almighty. Walk before me, and be blameless." We walk in relation to God. We walk with God. Then God said, "You will no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations." He did not have even one child, but God told him to call himself father of nations. "Don't see yourself as childless. See yourself as father. Call yourself father of nations."

God said to Jeremiah, "I chose you before I formed you in the womb. I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a prophet to the nations." He wanted the man to think this about himself: "I am a chosen one. I am a consecrated one. I am an appointed one." There was no way for him to think only about God or to avoid thinking about himself, because although God was speaking, God was saying something about the man. Unless we disregard the word of God, we cannot avoid thinking about the man, but to disregard the word of God is the opposite of being God-centered. If we are God-centered, we will think a lot about what he said about the man. So to be God-centered is not to think about God and nothing else, but to pay attention to what God says about himself and everything else. But Jeremiah answered, "God, I cannot speak, because I am too young." He did not say that God could not speak, or that God was too young. He said that he himself could not speak, that he himself was too young. He had a low self-image. Can you see it? What he said had nothing to do with God or what God said. This weak self-esteem was in fact man-centered and self-centered, that is, in the absolute sense that defined the self by the self, and not by the word of God. Moses was indeed a broken man after tending sheep for forty years in the desert, but when he insisted that he did not possess the eloquence or charisma

to speak, God did not praise him for his humility, but God became angry. According to the man-made standard of piety, Jeremiah offered a humble reply, but notice that it made him defy what God said to him, as if the divine declaration "I chose! I consecrated! I appointed!" did not matter. His low self-esteem hindered obedience and ministry. Consider Isaiah. He cried, "Woe is me!" He regarded himself as unclean. But when God told him that he had been cleansed and his iniquity taken away, Isaiah said, "Here am I. Send me."

When God establishes a relation of faith with a person, he contradicts that person's weak self-esteem, because this very relation of faith inevitably transforms the person into something superior. So God said, "Do not say that you are too young. To whomever I tell you to go, you will go, and whatever I tell you to say, you will say. Do not be afraid of people, for I am with you to rescue you." God did not want Jeremiah to say that he was too young, but rather to act on the word. And God did not want Jeremiah to be afraid of people, but rather to believe that he was someone who had God's protection. God did not say, "Do not say that you are too young, because you are super smart." But he said, "Because I have commanded you. Because I will deliver you." Jeremiah was acting under divine authority. Human limitations no longer mattered. God-centered thinking does not destroy or lower the self-image, but in a relation of faith, it produces a high self-image. His weak self-image was in fact self-centered, focused on his own youth, inexperience, and such things. He defined his identity and ability by himself. God wanted him to define his identity relative to God, as one who was chosen, consecrated, and appointed. And God wanted him to define his ability relative to God, as one who was delegated to go, commanded to speak, and protected by deity. God did not want Jeremiah to stop thinking about himself. If Jeremiah were to be faithful in his mission, he would have to think a lot about himself, about what God said concerning his identity and mission.

You say, "But that was something God did for Abraham, wasn't it? Isaac came by a miracle. Abraham produced Ishmael with a woman who was not barren, and God rejected the child. So God told Abraham that he would become the father of nations, but God was the one who made it happen." Precisely! This fits in with what we have been saying. Our self-image is wrong if we define ourselves by ourselves, or in relation to ourselves or something other than God. On the other hand, we have a correct self-image when it is defined by a correct God-image. We see ourselves correctly, when we see ourselves in God. Our self-image is not only about ourselves, but about what we are in relation to God, or in Christ. And when we see ourselves in Christ, we cannot have a low self-image, because that would mean that we must have a low God-image. A person who claims to know God but who has a low self-image either has a low image of God or the truth is that he has no relation to God. This is how Satan has deceived people. He wants people to experience no difference and no benefit even if they have come to know God through Jesus Christ.

Although God was the one who performed his promise to Abraham, he still wanted Abraham to see himself as more than a barren man with no heir. It would be a denial of the divine promise if the divine promise does not change how we see ourselves. If God promises you something, then you should see yourself as someone who possesses that something, otherwise, it would be a denial of the promise. Abraham became a father of nations because of God, but God himself was not the father of nations. God said the man

Abraham was. Jeremiah was a prophet because of God, but God himself was not the prophet. The man Jeremiah was. And God told Jeremiah to see himself as one who was ordained to speak for God. He was not too young. He was not disqualified, but he had received the authority and inspiration from God to speak. To see himself as something different or less than this would have been a rejection of God's command.

## **Self-Esteem**

Our self-image should be more than merely positive. A Christian should have a superhuman level of self-esteem that steps far beyond what is represented by the self-delusion and arrogance of man. We can have a supernatural self-image. A positive self-image that is based on self-determination and wishful thinking will come to nothing, and end in disappointment. But the Christian's super self-image is based on divine promise and power. He is able to move forward in life with confidence. If a man defines himself by himself, his self-image would still be limited by what he believes about human potential, and any presumption will soon end in failure. As great as he thinks he is, he cannot think that he can heal the sick and cast out demons. But the Christian believes that he can do these things, and then he makes them happen by the name of Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder that this super self-image poses a threat to Satan, so that he would do all that he can to deceive God's people, and to make them reject this? He has succeeded in making the church teach the opposite.

We can multiply examples on how God changed people's self-image and self-esteem once he established a relation of faith with them. Now that your thinking has been opened, you will see that this happened with almost every person that God dealt with in the Bible. I want to point out something else important. God not only changes how we see ourselves, but he also changes how we see other people. Abraham saw himself as old and childless. When God appeared to him, he changed what Abraham thought about himself. Now he saw himself as healthy and vigorous, and the father of entire nations. But Sarah was also old and barren. God's promise to Abraham demanded that he change how he looked at his wife as well. She was not too old, because God would work a miracle. She would not be barren, because God would fulfill his word and she would become pregnant. She would become the mother of nations. Thus God's word enables us to look at other people -- those who have a relation of faith with him -- with a supernatural optimism. We see ourselves as forgiven, liberated, healed, called, and empowered to a superhuman degree. And we also see others who have faith in Christ this way -- they are forgiven, liberated, healed, called, and empowered. Even if a person is broken and uneducated, if he has faith in Jesus Christ, we see him as valuable, useful, even as a preacher and a miracle worker. If a person is sick, we see him as healed. If he is poor, we see him as rich. When I see someone who is depressed, I see someone who can be happy. When I see someone bound by alcoholism, I see someone who can be free and useful. He is not limited by human potential. We see God's potential working in him.

On the other hand, if a person is not related to God by faith, then we have no basis to think well of him. If we force ourselves to have a high view of him, this opinion still could not reach beyond inherent human limitations. We still would not think of him as a miracle

worker, who has the potential to heal the sick and walk on water. Nevertheless, because of our faith in God, we see someone who might turn to Christ and become transformed and enhanced in every way. When you have a man-centered outlook, you will not only look down on yourself, but you will also look down on other people, neglecting their possibilities in God. Jesus said that anyone who believes in him can do the same works that he did and even greater works. So when I look at someone who has faith in Jesus, I see a person who can heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. This is not something that one person would usually think about another person, and even the most delusional non-Christian would not possess such a high opinion of himself or of his fellows. But this is what we can think, and what we ought to think, when we see someone who believes in Jesus Christ. Christians almost never think this way about other Christians, because their view of themselves and others are man-centered in the absolute sense, just like how the non-Christians look at themselves and others. They measure themselves by themselves, and they think that to be God-centered is to put down themselves or to refuse to think about themselves. To be God-centered does not mean we compare ourselves to God, and then put down ourselves because we have lost! Religious traditions that boast of their "God-centered" theology commit this very error. It is essentially man-centered thinking. Rather, to be God-centered means that we think about ourselves in the light of our relation to God. And if our relation to him is one of faith, then his word declares wonderful things about us.

God's word corrects our self-image, and builds our self-esteem on Jesus Christ. God declared, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is the basis for Christian self-identity. He is our God, we are his people. No matter what we are facing, and no matter what topic we are thinking about, we will never deviate from this, or follow a path that is inconsistent with this. He belongs to us, and we belong to him. As Paul said, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Jesus built a strong sense of self into his disciples, and he used himself as the foundation for their self-image. He did this to individuals. When Peter confessed him as the Christ, he answered, "You are Peter. On this rock I will build my church." He wanted Peter to have an identity, to know himself: "You are Peter." Later Peter would write that all believers are as "living stones" that come together to become the church of Jesus Christ. Peter also wanted us to know who we are in Christ. Jesus also did this to groups. When he sent out the twelve apostles, he said to them, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons." Of course they would do it by the power of God, but he did not say, "God will heal the sick, God will raise the dead," but he said, "You will do these things." Later he addressed a much larger group of disciples and made even stronger promises than he gave the apostles: "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you." He did not say, "God has authority over all the power of the enemy, and nothing can hurt him," but he said, "Nothing will hurt you." He wanted his followers to have confidence about themselves, but this confidence is founded on his authority. This is true God-centered thinking.

### **Self-Confidence**

Jesus said all kinds of things that enable his followers to build confidence about themselves – not confidence in themselves, but confidence about themselves, in him. If we are God-

centered, then we will believe what he says about us even when what we see and what we feel seem different, and when we have this faith, reality itself will change to conform to the word of God about us. He said, "Have faith in God. For truly I say to you, if anyone tells this mountain to move into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, he will have whatever he says." Once you have entered into this faith relation with God, you can command a mountain to move, and it would obey you. He said you can do it, so obviously he wants you to think that you can do it. Jesus said that the Christian's faith is "in God," but in the context of this faith, when the Christian commands the mountain to move, he believes "what he says will happen" – not what God says, but what the man himself says. And he will have whatever he – the man – says. This is in direct contradiction to all of Christian orthodoxy and so-called "God-centered" theology. This is because historic orthodoxy has betrayed the word of God for just that long. It has never been God-centered, but throughout history it has made the claim with such blatant self-righteousness that it managed to convince people that it was truly God-centered.

In the context of faith "in God" – this is essential, of course – Jesus said that his follower can have faith in himself, so much so that he believes his own command for a miracle would happen. He can believe in his own words, even when these words demand a miracle for them to be fulfilled. Gabriel assured Mary, "For nothing is impossible with God." And Jesus said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." Christians magnify the omnipotence of God, as they should. They write books about it. They sing about it. They debate unbelievers about it. But then things become awkward when Jesus added, "All things are possible to him who believes." Ah...all the things we said about God's omnipotence suddenly apply to the Christian, to anyone who has faith. With one word, Jesus elevated human possibilities all the way to omnipotence. What?! And he kept teaching it: "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." He did not say, "Nothing will be impossible for God." We already know that. But he said, "If you have faith...nothing will be impossible for you." Nothing will be impossible for the man who has faith. Did he mean that we can achieve difficult things by our effort and determination, by much ingenuity and persistence? Is this like how people say, if you believe in yourself, you can climb Mount Everest or become the CEO? Did he mean that kind of lame natural "faith"? But it involves no effort. This is the kind of faith that achieves far beyond the possibilities of natural human potential, since he referred to moving a physical mountain by merely speaking to it, and in context, also to casting out demons and healing the sick. He referred to a spectacular supernatural occurrence, and it is accomplished by speaking, not by intense labor and design, and without any hardship. Under God, a man wields omnipotence by speaking in faith. He applied omnipotence to man, referring to a man who has faith with the same expressions used when referring to God.

Why did Jesus say it like this? Why did he want a man who follows him to possess this sense of control? Why did he want a woman to feel this way about herself? We can say a lot about this, but our topic is the self. You see, the minimization or destruction of the self makes the spirit sick. The self is still there, but when a person pretends that the self is not there, it does not make it holy and healthy, but twisted and grotesque. As the Scripture says,

"A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope." He did not come to break man. He came to heal man. Jesus did not only come to restore our image of God, but also the image of man. And under God, when man is related to God in faith, this is the potential of man. This is what God wants you to think about yourself, but not until you believe. Christians have historically robbed humanity of this. Under Satan, they have worked to steal, kill, and destroy, when Jesus wanted to offer man an abundant life. They have labored against the doctrine of Christ to destroy the self of man, rather than to restore it by placing it in proper relation to God. Let us destroy this kind of demonic theology that poisons humanity.

Jesus said that anyone who has faith in him can do the same works that he did, and even greater works. He preached the gospel, confronted religious leaders and unbelievers, healed the sick, cast out demons, opened blind eyes, walked on water, multiplied food, and raised the dead. He saw visions and uttered prophecies. He spoke to God, and God answered from heaven with a voice of thunder. If we were to do these things, we would only be doing the same works that he did, but he said we would do even greater things, not greater only in terms of quantity, but greater mainly in terms of degree of power. We would not be able to do these things without God, but that is not an issue, because we are not without God. When we think about ourselves, we do not think that we are sinners and losers, but winners, ambassadors, and miracle workers. God wants us to think of ourselves this way.

Jesus also said, "If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, then you will ask what you wish, and it will be done for you." He said, "Apart from me you can do nothing." Religious tradition wants us to think that he said, "You can do nothing." But he said, "Apart from me" you can do nothing. And he said, "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit." Faith in Christ is essential. We do not think of ourselves apart from him. Yet he did not say, "God will bear much fruit. God will get what he wishes." But he said, "You will bear much fruit" and "You will get what you wish." He was careful to emphasize the human self as it relates to God. Why? Man is made in the image of God, in the image of the "I AM," and if the self is suppressed, it will wither. It will not become selfless and holy, but it will become grotesque, and very perverted. This is what we see in most religious disciples, who follow the traditions of men rather than the teachings of Christ. For this reason, Christians are often very creepy and repulsive. They were broken people in the first place, and then church teachings wrecked them even more. Mangled by man-made orthodoxy. Disfigured by satanic teachings such as cessationism and other doctrines of unbelief. They do not practice denial of the self, but they maintain the self in denial. They are unhappy and disgusting people, and they want to drag you down with them. And they call that evangelism. Of course, not all Christians are like this, because a few of them indeed have faith. They are beautiful, pleasant, and vibrant people. They exude the optimism of faith in God. We see the possibilities of omnipotence in them. Our aim is to awaken people to the truth, so that more people can become like this. As long as a person exists, the self will be there. And so his denial of the self results in self-righteousness, as well as other demonic characteristics. Then as Ishmael harassed Isaac, he will persecute those who have discovered themselves in Christ, and who have become confident and comfortable in him.

He said, "If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, then you will ask for whatever you wish." You. You will ask for what you wish. You will demand your will. To follow this teaching, you must think about yourself. If you do not think about yourself, then his words -- the words in this verse -- are not remaining in you. If the words of this verse remain in you, then you will think about yourself. You will think of yourself as someone who can ask for whatever you want, and then get whatever you want. You will think of yourself as one who can ask for your will in him, and then your will shall be done. If you do not think this way, then you have not connected with the verse. This is not a self-confidence that forgets God or that enthrones the self. It is a God-confidence that is applied to the self, or a self-confidence that is derived from God. It is a confidence that is infused and sustained and empowered by the words of Christ. If you do not think of yourself this way -- if you do not think that you can ask for your will to be done as a branch demands whatever it wants from the vine -- then it must mean that you are not remaining in him, or his words are not remaining in you. He said that if you remain in him, you can ask for whatever you will, but apart from him, you can do nothing. So if you think that you cannot ask for whatever you will, or if you think that you can do nothing, it must mean that you do not remain in him, and you live apart from him. You admit that you are without Christ.

### **Self-Love**

God-centered doctrine does not annihilate the self, but it restores the self to the proper place in relation to God. Passages in the Bible that human tradition uses to condemn self-love have been distorted. For example, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Didn't he say that we must deny the self? No, keep reading. He did not say what man-made piety claims that he said. He continued, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Right after he said to "deny himself" he said "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Jesus wants you to save your life and find your life. Thus he cannot mean that one must deny the self in the absolute sense, or in the sense taught by religious tradition through the centuries. And he continued, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" He was emphatic about saving the self, in the sense of one's soul. To state this in the terms of our context, "You must stop defining the self by the self, living the self by following the self. You must define the self by Christ, living the self by following Christ."

In another place, Jesus said that if a man does not hate his family members and his own life also, then "he cannot be my disciple." Man-made orthodoxy has construed this to mean that a person must continuously detest himself in order to be a disciple. However, Jesus was referring to someone who would come to him to become his disciple. You are supposed to hate your old life, which you leave behind so that you can follow Jesus. This is the same teaching discussed above. He did not say that you must deny yourself and follow him, and then continue to deny yourself. He did not say that you must reject your non-Christian life, become a Christian, and then reject your Christian life! This is the level of utter stupidity promoted by historic orthodoxy on the doctrines of discipleship and sanctification. Jesus said that you deny yourself, so that you may save yourself. That is the reason to deny

yourself in the first place – to save yourself. You are not supposed to deny the self that has been saved. Or do you think that you are supposed to hate your new family members too – that is, your brothers and sisters in Christ? If you hate your new life and your new friends, then you are still an unbeliever, and you have never started to follow Christ.

You are supposed to hate your old life, or your life as a non-Christian, so that you may leave that behind and follow Jesus. But then you are supposed to love your life from that point forward. You are not supposed to hate your life with Jesus! You are supposed to hate your life with Satan, but love your new life with Christ. If you continue to hate your life after you have started to follow Jesus, this can only mean that you hate Jesus too. This is what Satan wants people to do, and this is what orthodox religious people have promoted through the centuries – to hate Jesus. But they can all go to hell if they hate themselves so much, if they even hate themselves in Christ. If they hate themselves in Christ, are they in Christ at all? Either they have never been saved, or they lie about hating themselves, but they say what they think they are supposed to say, or what they have been taught to say under the threat of a fraudulent orthodoxy. I love myself in Christ. I am a new creation, born again as God's masterpiece. I love what God has done in me, and what he is doing through me. I love my new life in Christ. I love my in-Christ "self." God said he will perfect me in spirit, soul, and body. I believe it. I love it. I do not deny any of it. If you disagree, then you are not a follower of Christ and you hate him, and you can just go to hell.

Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." He did not say, "Love your neighbor instead of yourself." Religious people often blast the non-Christians for saying, "Love yourself," as if this is the antithesis of the teachings of Christ. Indeed, non-Christians are wrong in everything that they say about love, but the Christians are no better, only more confusing and hypocritical. Neither really agrees with Jesus. It is impossible to obey this commandment of love toward others without a strong sense of self and strong love for self. If you hate yourself, then to love others as yourself would be to hate others. And Paul said, "He who loves his wife loves himself." So how can you love your wife if you hate yourself? Like the mindless self-deprecation practiced by Christians, self-loathing is also a cheap counterfeit spirituality embraced either by those who have been taught false doctrine or those who detest themselves because they have never been born again by the love of God. How can you hate the work of God in you, unless God has not done any work in you? How can you hate the new creation, the new race of humanity that God foreordained to inherit eternity? I love it. I am a part of it, and I love every bit of it.

### **Superhuman**

Paul also directed believers to define themselves by their faith in Christ. This transformed and enhanced their image of the self to a superhuman level. The Christian who defines himself by who he is and what he has because of his faith will see himself as something more than what is considered inherently human. You are no longer only human when your entire being has been infused with the Spirit of Deity. The non-Christian may have a positive image of himself, but because he is a child of the devil, an enemy of God, and because he is broken by sin, this positive image is delusional. But the Christian has Jesus Christ as the basis for a positive image of himself. He is superior not because he is



inherently superior, and not because of his own talents, good works, and such things, but because God has made him superior by grace, as a gift. Now the Christian can see himself in Christ, and the Bible teaches that God has predestined the believer to conform to the image of Christ. Thus his self-image moves beyond even that which is delusional to that which is supernatural, but this supernatural image is realistic and centered on the word of God. It is even more extreme than delusion, or the wishful thinking and imagination of man, but it is a reality in the one who believes.

He told Timothy to remember who he was because of his faith. He wrote, "Continue in what you have learned and have believed, knowing from whom you have learned it, and how since childhood you have known the scriptures, which have given you wisdom to receive salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Remember who you are. Who are you? You are one who has learned from reliable sources, and you have believed the truth. You are one who has learned the scriptures since childhood, and the scriptures have given you the wisdom for salvation by faith in Christ. This is who you are. He also wrote, "This charge I give you in accordance with the prophecies spoken about you, so that by them you might fight a good fight." And he wrote, "Do not neglect the gift that you have, which was given to you by prophecy when the elders laid their hands on you." Then he wrote, "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you by the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." He did not tell Timothy, "Just forget yourself. Just destroy yourself. Just deny yourself." He built up Timothy's self, but he built it on the revelations and operations of the Spirit, and not on Timothy's human potential.

The reason that this kind of teaching is absent from Christian theology is not because it is some hidden teaching – now you can see it clearly. It is because most believers and theologians are out of touch with Christ and lack the operations of the Spirit, and they wish to justify their shortcoming. They want everybody to be deficient like they are, and they are afraid that anyone would believe the word of God and become better. They want to be recognized as experts and leaders, when they are not even worthy to be the doormats of those who have faith. Their "God-centered" theology is in reality the bastard child of unbelief and selfishness. Do not let the label fool you! If they do not accept the good things that God says about the self of man in Christ, then their theology is man-centered, unbelief-centered, demon-centered, and never God-centered. Use every channel you have to expose this scam, so that all the world will know to laugh at them, and their lack of faith and power. Then their false doctrines and creeds will no longer remain things to be studied and admired, and the church and humanity will return to the teachings of Christ, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light. Ishmael would always try to bully Isaac. But the inheritance belongs to the son of divine promise and miracle power, not the son of human effort and design.

Paul also addressed groups in the same way, building them up in Christ. He said that believers have been made "the righteousness of God in him." If you believe in Jesus Christ, then you no longer need to be ashamed or timid before the presence of God. You are righteous. You are more righteous than the unbelievers. You are more righteous than the most righteous person in human history. You are more righteous than what is humanly

possible. Your righteousness exceeds human limitations. And it is because you are GOD-centered that you are able to think this way about your SELF. This is because your righteousness comes from God. It is God's own righteousness imputed to you in Christ. When you consider how righteous you are, you do not measure your self by your self. Even if you are delusional, your opinion can go only so far. But when you consider how righteous you are, you do not use your self as a reference, but you define how righteous you are by looking to how righteous God is. His righteousness is absolute, perfect, and superhuman. It is not only greater than human limitations, but greater than human imaginations. God's reality is greater than man's delusion. And this reality is our reality. This is how righteous you are, and God wants you to think this way about yourself. There is no place to boast, because this absolute righteousness comes from God as a gift. As the Bible says, "Let him who boasts, boast about the Lord."

When you feel so "right," nothing can stand in your way. When you are so "right," you cannot conceive of any reason why God would not answer your prayers for success and miracles. You cannot conceive of any reason why a sickness or demon would not depart when you command it to go. You have the "right-ness" of God. This is how God feels about himself, and he wants to share this feeling with you, through Jesus Christ. This is the power of the righteousness of God. It has been untapped for almost two thousand years. As much as the Reformation harped about justification by faith, it had no idea what it is. It did not get anywhere close to what the righteousness of God could mean to Christians, and to the world. God's righteousness is a thing of horror to Satan, but he is not nervous when it remains only a formal principle in Christian theology, rather than a vital power and a superhuman righteous feeling and confidence in every single believer. The prayer of a righteous man is effective indeed, but it is futile if no one actually feels righteous, or if this righteousness is only a theological principle and not a supernatural reality in man. What do we have in Christ? What Satan says about me is irrelevant, because I am God-centered, and I think about how righteous God is in me. This is the only basis on which I live. When Satan pokes at me with his little wrinkly finger, I slam his head off with the fist of God. Then I clobber his face into the ground over and over again like a madman until he is only a puddle of goo. This is the righteousness that we have in Christ Jesus.

Paul used the facts about how excellent and superior Christians are as a basis for exhortation toward holiness. He said, "Don't you know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit?" Our self-image, self-esteem, self-identity, self-definition, our sense of self, or whatever term we wish to use, is characterized by the knowledge that we are God's temple, housing the Holy Spirit. If you despise God's temple, then you despise God. But if you esteem God's temple, then you must admit that this doctrine builds your self-esteem, because it says that you are that temple. Human religion has been so successful that Christians are afraid to have a high self-esteem, but self-esteem is not an evil concept, and a high self-esteem is not in itself an evil thing. The pivotal issue is the basis of the self-esteem. If it is based on man's wishful thinking, or arrogance, or false philosophy, then it is evil. If the human self refers to itself to define itself, then it is evil. But if the human self refers to the gospel to define itself, and if it is based on the gift of God in Christ, and since all the credit returns to God, then it is good, admirable, and necessary.

Paul also said, "Don't you know that we shall judge angels?" He said this to direct the believers to settle disputes between themselves instead of bringing them before unbelievers, bringing shame to the name of Christ. Thus we are to think that we are those who shall judge even angels. Building up the image of ourselves by the facts of the gospel enables us to achieve self-aware and deliberate holiness, and mature character. Man-made doctrines and traditions that command us to denigrate the self and even dissolve the self cannot lead to holiness. It makes the thing that it claims to produce impossible. The Bible teaches that Christ was raised from the dead and then seated at the right hand of God. But Paul said that we have been seated together with him. We are seated at the right hand of God. If all things are under his feet, then all things are under our feet. If anyone denies this, it means that either he thinks Christ is not seated at the right hand of God so that all things are not under his feet, or he admits that he is not a follower of Christ so that he is not seated with him in the heavenly places. Either one would make this man a non-Christian, headed toward hellfire. He has no right to teach us theology. Let us violently shove useless babblers such as this to the side of the road and move forward. The Bible teaches that Christ has been made the heir of God, who would inherit all things. But Paul said that we are co-heirs with Christ. Therefore, we shall inherit all things. Paul said so many other things to build up the Christian self that we cannot list them all, for to attempt this would be to reproduce almost all his writings. When we keep this in mind and read his letters again, we see it everywhere.

## **Masterpiece**

For all the talk about selflessness and humility, the Bible places a curiously strong emphasis on how great we are. It could very well talk about how great Christ is without any mention of what this means to us, but it keeps talking about how great we are because of him. This would be strange if the traditional perspective is correct, but the traditional perspective is a scam. Man-made theology purports to be God-centered, so it keeps talking about how great God is and how sinful and defeated we are, whether or not we are talking about ourselves in relation to him. This kind of piety disregards or even condemns what God has done for us by Jesus Christ. Thus it is in reality a thoroughly man-centered theology, because it thinks about who man is in himself, or who man is without any regard for God or Jesus Christ. God-centered theology portrays God as great, even the only good, but by Jesus Christ he has also made us great. We are strong, and victorious, even superhuman in Christ. We are more than overcomers because of him. We are great not because of ourselves, or the world, or our wealth, or our education, or our race, or country, or status. We are great because of him. And in this, God is glorified. As the Bible says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Another translation says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." I am God's masterpiece. He created me in Christ Jesus, in the pattern of the Son of God. You are God's masterpiece. You have a destiny in Christ Jesus, foreordained by God.

From this perspective, we ought to proclaim the slogan that counterfeit God-centered theology hates so much: "God has a wonderful plan for your life." Of course many people do not dare to say this. They do not have any faith in God, and their lives will likely end in

failure and disaster, peppered throughout with sicknesses and tragedies, and they will blame it all on God's sovereignty. Refusing to take responsibility, they will shove the whole mess into his lap, and call that God-centered theology. It is the height of wickedness – and orthodoxy. Indeed, you do not have a wonderful plan for your life, and without Christ, even if you do, it will come to nothing. If you have faith in God, then it is an entirely different story. God himself, by his sovereign kindness and foreordination, has a wonderful plan for your life, far beyond what you could have designed for yourself. As you walk in faith through Jesus Christ, this plan will unfold before you and become reality. This is God-centered theology, and true piety.

John was writing about evil spirits and false prophets. He said to the Christians, "You are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." This builds confidence not only unto God but it builds confidence into men. The great God is not out there being great by himself, but the great God is in you and being great through you. John boosts our self-esteem, and he builds it by hooking it up with the total power of God. A God-centered mindset does not eliminate the self. If we are human, there will be a self, and the self will be a center of consciousness. A God-centered mindset is one that defines the self relative to God. There will always be a ME. However, for the Christian it is no longer a ME-ME, but God-ME, a Christ-ME. God is not "out there" doing his own thing and winning his battles while we suffer defeat and humiliation. God is in us, causing us to win together with him. This is his will. This is how he is glorified. John continued, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." Who is a winner in this world? Who defeats evil with good? Who comes out on top? Me. Me. Me! I am the one who has faith. I am a winner. I overcome. I come out on top. The one who is in me is greater than the one who is in the world. Therefore, I am greater than the world. God is in ME. We are not just talking about how great God is. We are not talking about how someone else is great. We are talking about ME. And God is in ME. If you believe in Jesus, then God is in you. If you have faith, then you are a winner. You overcome. You come out on top. See yourself this way. And this is your self-image and your self-esteem.

James wrote, "The faith-prayer will heal the sick. The Lord will raise him up." He said this as an instruction to all believers and all churches. This is intended to be a part of the everyday life of believers, and not something out of reach. When he added, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective," he meant the believers. He meant you. You are supposed to think, "I am a righteous person. My prayer is powerful and effective. My faith-word and faith-prayer will heal the sick. God will perform a miracle when I show up." He continued, "Elijah was a man like us." He used the prophet of miracles as an illustration, and instead of saying that we will never be like him, James said that Elijah was like us. There is no striving, no looking into the distant future. Elijah's example applies to us now. And James said that Elijah prayed, and it stopped the rain for three and a half years. Then he prayed again, and it started to rain. The prayer of Elijah was powerful and effective, and even controlled nature. You don't need to strive to become like Elijah, so that eventually your prayer will have a little power. This Elijah who dictated the weather was like you. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are a righteous person. Your prayer is powerful and

effective. You. Everywhere the Scripture builds this image into us about ourselves, that we are supernatural people because of Jesus Christ. We would be nothing without Christ, but we are not without him. We are forever united with Christ by faith, and we are superhuman beings in him. You are infused with deity by the Holy Spirit, that is, if you have also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit after believing in Christ. If you have a lower opinion of yourself, then you reject the gospel.

### **The Phony Piety of Tradition**

False humility is one of Satan's preferred weapons against Christians to keep them weak, full of unbelief, and unable to receive from God. It is an efficient attack, because when this kind of counterfeit piety becomes their own ideal, they will fight against God to defend it. Once they remain like this for several generations, the deception becomes historic orthodoxy, and authentic orthodoxy becomes heresy. This religious machine perpetuates itself, requiring minimal effort from the devil. The Christians become like a bunch of trapped animals, where one would step on the others in the attempt to climb out, while the others would pull him back down. What should we do, if we see the true light of Jesus Christ beyond the walls of a fraudulent orthodoxy? If we are trapped in false piety or false humility, and if we are trapped in man-made doctrines and traditions like most of those who claim to follow Christ, what should we do? The answer is easy. Climb out! Step on the fakers. Crush the theologians. Kick down their followers. Tear apart their systems and creeds. Build stairs out of their corpses if necessary. Come out to the freedom that Jesus has purchased for you by his blood. Then if they are willing, rescue the survivors of the historic religious scam, and if they are unwilling, leave them there to die. Many prefer to rot dead in Satan's hellhole than run free in Christ's pastures.

Man-centered humility is universal. When Christians talk about humility, they usually refer to this kind. It is not based on understanding, but it regards self-deprecation as something inherently meritorious or honorable. This is why they are arrogant about how much they put down themselves, and if you refuse to follow their example and trample on the blood of Christ, then they call you arrogant. Christ-centered humility builds our self-esteem on Jesus Christ. When we have this correct and healthy self-image, we no longer trip up ourselves, and we are no longer our own hindrances. We leave behind foolish hang-ups established by man-made ideas, and for the first time we become effective in faith, in love, and a force for the gospel. Jesus called you the salt of the earth and the light of the world. If he did not want you to think this way about yourself, then he would not have said it. He wanted you to think this. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. You. When you bravely admit this, then you are more likely to act like it. You will then have the effect of salt and light in this world.

Even some of the most arrogant people in the world would never say that they are the ambassadors of heaven, the sons of Almighty, the temple of the Spirit of God, seated at the right hand of the Most High, chosen to judge angels, with all things under their feet, wielding a name that dominates all three realms, and able to heal the sick, command the demons, receive visions and dreams, and prophesy the words of God. But we say all these things about ourselves. This is our image of ourselves. This is how we esteem ourselves.

The gospel does not call us to destroy the self, or to dissolve it into God, but to sharpen it, to strengthen it, and to place it in relation to God and in submission to God. The root of sin is not in having a strong sense of self, or to possess a strong self-awareness or self-image, but it is in defining the self by the wrong things, such as money, or gender, race or country, or occupation, or social status, or even yourself. This is to define yourself by yourself or by the world. This is to worship as deity things that are not deity. This is the kind of self-definition or self-centeredness that is sinful. Self-deprecation often comes from the same root that defines the self by the self, and not by the gospel. Self-appreciation that is based on the self is counted as arrogance, but self-deprecation that is also based on the self is counted as humility. This is deception. Both are sinful. Both are arrogance. This is because both count the self as God, as the standard that defines everything else. Even an extremely strong self-esteem is not sinful, but it depends on why you have this strong self-esteem. You can say, "I can do this because I am the best!" Or you can say, "I can do all things by Jesus Christ who gives me strength." You do not say, "I am God, so I can do all things." And you do not say, "He is God, so he can do all things" But you say, "I can do all things, because God enables me to do all things." As David said, "For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall." God does not leap over a wall. You leap over a wall, but you do it by his ability.

Satan has beat down Christians by making them think that the self is evil, especially a vibrant and positive sense of self. You are made in the image of I AM, and you are going to have a sense of self anyway. The difference is that if you ignore the issue, then this sense of self is going to become warped and grotesque. It will be defined by the world, and shaped by circumstances. The religious trick is to destroy the self. If you think about yourself, then you are sinful and selfish. But you do think about yourself. If you are human, then you cannot avoid it. The fraudulent doctrine generates a contradiction within the person, and it causes false guilt and prevents awareness. Wake up from this deception. You must define yourself, and define yourself relative to God, relative to who you are in Jesus Christ according to the gospel. The first issue is not whether you have a low self-esteem or a high self-esteem, but to find the right self-esteem. And when you define yourself by Jesus Christ, you will find that you have a Christ-level self-esteem. It will be an extreme self-esteem, a super-esteem. It will be higher by entire dimensions compared to the highest self-esteem attainable by an unbeliever. You must discover the correct reference point for defining yourself, then define yourself relative to that reference point. God has his self-identity in himself. Man should find his self-identity in Christ. God defines himself in relation to himself. Man should define himself in relation to God.

Most Christian teachings aim to erode a healthy sense of self and not to build it up by the word of God. They make people become more and more defeated and full of doubt, all the while thinking that they have become more humble. They become more hypocritical and self-righteous in their weakness. And because they are self-righteous about it, they will defend their weakness and unbelief, and they will even write down this attitude in their creeds to make it permanent and to ensure it survives through the centuries. This is how Satan cements his victory. Examine the Bible verses used by the preachers. They either do not say what the preachers want them to say, or the verses in reality require a strong sense of self to make sense of them and to obey them. There are indeed some who misconstrue

God's grace, but the solution is not to destroy all conception of God's grace, but to establish it upon Jesus Christ, who has satisfied divine justice so that divine grace may come upon us through faith. The same is true of the doctrine of self. Grasp the doctrine by the gospel, then you are on solid ground. Possess a clear definition of what you are and what you want in Christ Jesus.

## **Human Value and Theology**

There are other terms that overlap with what we are talking about. We should think about them the same way. We will think about the self, but on the foundation of Christ. It is wrong to think about God in a way that destroys the self, for then there would be no self to think about God. It is wrong to think about self in a way that neglects God, for then the self would become God, and the result is an inaccurate image of the self. It is also blasphemy and idolatry. We will think about the self as vividly and intensely as we can, but we will center what we think about the self on God, especially as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

An example of these other terms is self-value. This is close to what we mean by self-image or self-esteem. We think about this the same way. Christians oppose non-Christian theories on self-love, self-esteem, and so on. They complain about how false ideas have infected modern preaching, but they teach a version of these things that is far worse. Some people think that the idea of self-value is evil, or if we think about the topic at all, we ought to think of ourselves as having very little value. This is what the devil wants. God has the greatest self-value. He has infinite self-value, self-love, self-worth, or whatever term we wish to use. He ought to think this way about himself, because he indeed has infinite worth. He has value in himself, because of himself. He ought to have self-value because he indeed has value in himself. Man is made in the image of God, so the category of self-value also applies. The difference is in the reference point, or the basis of man's value.

Man has no value in himself, but his value is assigned by God, by what God says about him, by how God treats him, and by what God has done for him or given him. God has value because of what he is. Man has value because of what God says he is. Man's value is not intrinsic, but assigned and derived. If the sense of self-value is self-centered, it is false. It is idolatrous. If the self-value is God-centered, then it is right. And this God-centered sense of self-value can be extremely high. It depends on what value God has assigned to him. A God-centered mindset does not mean that one has no self-value or low self-value, but in Christ it means that a man ought to have a trillion times more self-value than even the most delusional and arrogant non-Christian. This is because God does for us more than what we can even ask or think. The reality of God is better than the wishful thinking of man.

Jesus said that the sparrows appeared insignificant, but not one of them could fall to the ground apart from the will of God. Then he said, "Fear not, therefore. You are worth more than many sparrows." He was addressing issues related to eschatology and missiology, among other things. He dictated items concerning theology and character on the basis of the value of man. Was this man-centered theology? Jesus challenged the religious people,

and said if any of them had a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, they would take hold of it and pull it out. Then he said, "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!" Thus he decided policy on something as important and controversial as the Sabbath on the basis of the value of man. Was this man-centered thinking? Jesus said that the birds do not sow, or reap, or harvest, but the Father still feeds them. And he said, "Are you not much more valuable than they?" What is our problem, if we worry about things like money, food, and clothes? He said, "O you of little faith!" He made an argument about the value of man into a basis for faith in God. If a preacher on television uses the same reasoning, he would be branded a man-centered, charismatic, health and wealth heretic. And if those self-proclaimed "God-centered" Christians face what the Jesus in the Bible said, instead of the Jesus they invented, they would make the same accusation against Jesus. This is because they have never been God-centered, but tradition-centered -- that is, man-centered. They attack "man-centered" theology only when the "man" is not one of them. They consider themselves God-centered because they regard their tradition -- their "man" -- as God.

Jesus appealed to human value to establish doctrine, decide policy, and build faith. If I were to apply the theology of Jesus, I would have to think, "God considers the life of every sparrow, so that not one can fall to the ground apart from his will. And I am worth more than many sparrows. So as I confess the Lord Jesus before people, I will not fear what men can do to me, but I will fear God, who can destroy both the body and the soul in hell, including the bodies and souls of those who oppose me. I will acknowledge the Lord Jesus before men, and the Lord Jesus will acknowledge me before God." And I would have to think, "God did not make me for the Sabbath, but he made the Sabbath for me. God does not reduce my value, but he assigns high value to me. This value is much greater than the religious traditions of men. I am worth more than man-made doctrines and creeds. Therefore, I have the freedom to receive God's gifts on any day of the week, including the Sabbath. And I am liberated to perform works of mercy on any day of the week, including the Sabbath. This includes ministering God's gifts to other people, such as miracles of healing." And then I would have to think, "God feeds the birds who don't do anything except fly around and have fun. And I am worth more than birds. Therefore, I have faith that God prospers me and protects me. I will not worry about money, food, and clothes. I have faith because of ME -- my worth, my value, and my importance. This is a value that God has assigned to me, and I will not allow those worthless religious people and their creeds and institutions to take this confidence away from me. I shall damn them to hell before I allow them to diminish even one little thing that belongs to me in Christ. They can burn in hell, but in Christ I shall live in heaven even while I walk the earth."

This is what Jesus requires me to think. This is the line of reasoning he requires me to follow. Does this mean that Jesus was a man-centered preacher? A people-pleaser? Was he a seeker-friendly false teacher, telling people only what they wished to hear? He did not please the religionists when he opposed their traditions with arguments based on human value. His doctrine is also opposed by those who call themselves the guardians of the faith today. Jesus was not a false teacher, but the problem is that the Christians who insist on a God-centered theology today do not know what it means to be God-centered, and what God-centered theology means to the human self. If Jesus was a true teacher from God, then this means that God-centered theology does not demand a devaluation or destruction of the



self, but instead it catapults a person's sense of self -- his self-love, self-esteem, self-value, self-worth, and all the other terms we could use about the self – to extreme heights, to superhuman and supernatural levels far beyond the imaginations of man-centered thinking. Man-centered theology is wrong if it is an absolute man-centeredness, but if in a context of faith our attention is centered on man as he is related to God, then it is a God-centered theology of man. Such a God-centered theology increases self-value and self-esteem. This is not historic orthodoxy, a fraudulent orthodoxy that keeps men in defeat and unbelief, and in demonic bondage. This is authentic orthodoxy, which leads men to gladness and triumph by Jesus Christ.

### **3. THE TRUTH ABOUT 1 PETER 3:15**

Here is a strange thing. Teachers of Christian apologetics almost always refer to 1 Peter 3:15 as their charter, but they are the ones who have abused the verse more than anyone. Pick up any book that addresses how the cults distort Scripture, and you will see the constant emphasis on interpreting a text in its proper context. Turn to the beginning of the same book, and you will likely find the author refer to 1 Peter 3:15 as the justification, nay, the divine commission for the whole project. But this same author would abuse the verse in the same way that he shows the cults do.

It says, "But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord, always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect." Read the text for yourself and observe the context. See what the verse is really saying. Take in as much of the context as you can. Read everything that comes before the verse, or the entire letter if you wish. The truth is that 1 Peter 3:15 is not talking about apologetics as we use the term, and it is not talking about answering our peers. It is written in the context of Peter's instruction on the proper attitude and response in the face of interrogation from authority figures such as officials, masters, and husbands -- people who at that time had the authority to punish, torture, or even kill the Christians.

#### **Our Lord is Jesus**

It is under this kind of pressure that Peter tells us to fortify Christ as Lord in our hearts. Regard Jesus as holy and precious. Enthroned him in your heart. Let him have that unique and highest place. "Jesus is Lord!" -- this is our stance when we face interrogation for our faith. This is the foundation that supports everything we do, or every aspect of our response. Whatever we say cannot deviate from this. If Jesus Christ is set in place in our hearts, then even when we face extreme danger because of our faith, we would not confess that the state or government is Lord, or that our master or employer is Lord, or that our parent or husband is Lord, and thus compromise our faith.

This is the most important part of the verse, but it is also the most neglected. In terms of the proportion of attention received, this part of the verse is practically ignored. However, when someone is under pressure, when someone is facing danger, this is what he needs to hear: "Hold fast to Jesus as your Lord! Regard him as holy and precious in your heart! Never let go." He needs to hear this more than he needs to hear: "Always be ready to defend your faith." If he fails to hold fast to Jesus as Lord in his heart, then he cannot defend his faith anyway. It is shameful that most teachers of apologetics spend so much more time in telling people how to hold fast to Jesus with their mouths, than in telling them how to hold fast to Jesus in their hearts. The result is that their teachings produce a mass of high-minded religious hypocrites who have lost Christ in their hearts long ago.

Hold fast to Jesus in your heart. Make up your mind that he is forever your Lord and your God. Whatever happens, do not give that up. Never compromise because of fear. As verse 14 says, "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled." You see, Peter is talking about a situation in which there could be something to fear, but you will not yield to this if you will set Jesus

in place in your heart. Never waver in your commitment to Jesus. Regard him as holy, unique, and as more precious than your own life.

Now although we seem to move forward to other parts of the verse, in reality they are extensions of this first and most essential part. Jesus is holy and precious. Jesus is Lord. I would gratefully approve if you would construe our whole discussion as one that explores the proper way to encourage this part of Peter's teaching.

### **Our Faith is True**

As we enthrone Christ in our hearts, so that we are immovable in him, we are prepared to answer the men who interrogate us about our faith. Our response is described as an account or a defense about our faith. How is this account or defense to be presented? The verse is usually used out of context to instruct believers on how they ought to behave when preaching or conversing with peers in a free society. However, the actual context is interrogation, so that this verse alone cannot tell us whether our ordinary apologetics should mainly consist of offering arguments to justify our faith, or whether we should instead exert various degrees of effort in attacking our opponents for their non-Christian beliefs. In other words, the proper behavior under official interrogation, or even violent torture, might not be the best approach for an everyday justification of our faith in preaching or conversation. Have you seen even one of those teachers of apologetics make this distinction when discussing this text? But this text is clearly talking about one type of situation and not the other. I say that they are not qualified to teach Bible interpretation and Christian apologetics, let alone to critique how we do these things.

The religious leaders in Peter's time persecuted authentic orthodoxy in the name of historic orthodoxy. Ishmael would always harass Isaac. The flesh would always contend against the spirit, and man-made doctrines and traditions would always attempt to supplant divine revelations. The apostle's apologetics is intended to defend authentic orthodoxy against the historic orthodoxy that persecutes the church. If men would hold fast to Jesus Christ, then surely the historic and the authentic would be the same, but that has not been the case. At times the situation had been better, and at times it had been worse, but historic orthodoxy -- man-made orthodoxy -- had never truly accepted Jesus Christ as he is revealed by the gospel.

Never fear the theologians of the historic church. When they persecute you for believing the word of God, in your heart hold on tightly to Jesus as Lord, regard only him as holy and dear to you. Commit yourself wholly to him. Then answer the theologians. Tell them what the word of God says. Tell them what you believe. Even if they hold an official position over you, in a free society you would have the option to depart. And when they no longer have authority over you, then they become only mere men offering their foolish opinions. Now attack them for their unbelief. Publicize their error. Overturn their regime. Unbelief is not a trivial oversight. The theology of unbelief is not the gospel. It steals the name of Jesus and makes a counterfeit religion that has none of the power belonging to the original. Then it compels everyone to comply. Overthrow this tyranny. There is no need to hesitate.

In some societies, we could live ten lifetimes without ever facing an official interrogation on the level that Peter has in mind. Even husbands usually either would not, or could not, beat their wives with impunity. So must we "always" answer when confronted? Why couldn't we do it on our terms instead? Should our "apologetics" still be a response or a defense? Why shouldn't it be rather a direct, active, and relentless assault? Moreover, although a defense could surely consist of philosophical arguments, it is impossible that Peter had only this, or even mainly this, in mind. What kind of philosophical argument would the typical slave or a house wife at that time offer against an interrogator or authority figure? Consider how they answered. The early disciples referred to the scriptures, and said that their beliefs and actions merely followed what the prophets said. And they just as readily referred to their visions and miracles as their answer to official interrogation. Why am I doing this? Paul would say, "Because Jesus appeared to me and told me to do this." He answered this way even though he knew more scriptures and arguments than we do. Nowadays there are people who have been converted by visions and dreams of Jesus. Are they wrong if they offer this as the reason for their hope in Jesus? Do they disobey 1 Peter 3:15? Certainly, they do not. The elite apologists would regard them like the cults. But these apologists are the ones treating this text like the cults they oppose.

The verse teaches us to state the reason for our hope in Jesus, not to state the reason why the other person must believe in Jesus. We can appeal to the scriptures and preach the gospel to those who interrogate us, but the verse itself only tells us to state the reason why we believe or how we have come to believe. It does not say that our answer must prove the truth of the Christian faith to the other person's satisfaction. The verse itself does not require one to develop an entire system of apologetics. One might say, "I was lost in sin, but one day Jesus appeared to me and revealed himself as the Son of God, and I believed in him. This is the same Jesus that the Bible teaches." Another might say, "I was a cripple from birth. I had never walked. One day a preacher laid his hands on me in the name of Jesus, and I was healed. I gave my life to Jesus, and confessed him as Lord and God, the Savior of the world." Then another might say, "I was a thief and a murderer. But one day I found a gospel tract and read it. It dawned on me that I was a sinner and that Jesus Christ came to save me. I believed on him and I was changed." All these answers would satisfy what 1 Peter 3:15 requires. Each person stated his reason for his hope in Christ. The other person might or might not be convinced, but the Christian offered his answer in each instance. Now if someone became a Christian because he had read a 600-page book on Christian apologetics, filled with technical arguments, equations, or what-not, then that would be his reason. But he cannot insist that other people must offer the same kind of reason, and most of the answers and conversions in the Bible itself are not associated with this kind.

In hijacking this verse to exclusively endorse intricate systems of apologetics, Christian teachers have undermined legitimate and much more common reasons for faith. Many have even given the impression that a person's original reason for faith is defective, and that he must place his faith on this other foundation of academic apologetics. But as long as the foundation consists of a faith in Christ that agrees with the gospel, it is legitimate. We could add a bunch of arguments to support it, but these would not be the reason for the person's faith. They would be the weapons he uses to engage enemies of the faith, but these are not the reason for his own faith in Christ. In distorting this verse about apologetics, in order to

teach apologetics, the teachers of apologetics end up destroying the very kind of apologetics that Peter encourages in this verse. We ourselves offer a most powerful system of apologetics. It is biblical to offer intellectual arguments for the Christian faith, even the most intricate philosophical arguments, but this is more directly justified by other portions of Scripture, because 1 Peter 3:15 is not talking about this. We may use the verse as a general endorsement for apologetics, but if in the process we lose sight of the main point of the verse, then it is time to perform some of that fancy apologetics against ourselves. To put it another way, only the people who acknowledge the main point of the verse has the right to make a broader application of it, because they are less likely to subvert the original intent to push their own agenda.

### **Our Way is Peace**

We fortify our hearts with "Jesus is Lord" when we face official interrogation, even if this means prison and torture. And with our hearts anchored in Christ, we offer our answer or defense. The Bible certainly endorses making arguments for the Christian faith, but in the context of this verse, our answer can be whatever led you to the faith. The standard interpretation of the verse is a betrayal of the apostle, of suffering believers, and of the practice of apologetics itself.

When threatened by authority figures with the power to punish, we refuse to fear or to compromise, but we hold Jesus Christ dear in our hearts, regarding him as holy and precious. Then we are always ready to state the reason for our faith. This is our reason for our faith in Christ. It could consist of our experience of conversion, or our upbringing by holy parents, or miracles of nature or of healing, or visions and dreams. Of course, if some of us were convinced by arguments that accompanied the presentation of the gospel, and that would be the reason. The verse does not restrict the answer or defense to a specific kind of reason or system. And on its own, the verse cannot make apologetics into the elaborate academic enterprise that we have today.

We must not say that a Christian is not performing legitimate apologetics when he offers his own reason for coming to the faith. If he despises intellectual arguments, then he would be wrong, but this is a separate issue that we should address with him. He has offered an acceptable answer or defense as long as he does not claim that his own reason is sufficient proof to someone else. Nevertheless, the other person may in fact accept this testimony and come to faith in Christ as a result. Then, his reason for coming to faith would be, "A Christian told me how he came to believe in Jesus, and when I heard it, I also believed." This would be this second man's reason, and it would also be legitimate as far as 1 Peter 3:15 is concerned.

We offer our answer or defense with "gentleness and respect" -- toward authority figures, because this is the only kind of people specified by the context. What this gentleness entails is not left to guesswork or contemporary culture, but it is also indicated by the context. This is also universally ignored and even contradicted by teachers of apologetics. The context refers to the authority of human institutions (2:13), and the threat goes as far as the kind of punishment that governors and even the emperor can impose (v. 13-14). When we make a broader observation of the cultural context, we notice that religious controversies

were often addressed by violent suppression, including false accusations, beatings, and even murder. It is only against this textual and cultural context, and even more specifically when addressing human institutions with the authority to punish, that Peter teaches Christians to respond with "gentleness" -- an approach that stands as a contrast against violence. Of course, this violence includes verbal threats of violence, which Christians also ought to avoid. The verse does not refer to speaking with soft words and an effeminate tone, and it does not contradict the fierce and demeaning language Jesus often applied to his opponents, the kind of language also used by the prophets and the apostles.

Have you seen this verse presented this way, especially in the context of teaching apologetics? It is the obvious and undeniable teaching of the verse. It is not difficult. You just need to read it. Many people are obsessed with apologetics, and consider themselves experts, but they throw this verse around like Peter is not even there. The apostle is ostracized from the discussion, and his concerns are disregarded, not mentioned. Why? It is because these people are not good at apologetics, and not even good at reading. The devotees of apologetics end up robbing everybody by perverting the verse for their narrow purpose. Their whole thing amounts to this: "Go make some good arguments, but be nice when you talk to people." But the verse does not say this. It is so far from what the verse means and what the rest of Scripture exemplifies that this interpretation amounts to a rejection of the verse. Peter was teaching God-like quality of Christian ethics, not the shallow tenderness of Confucian ethics. Much teaching on Christian character is really Confucianism in Christian vocabulary.

Now do you see what Peter was really saying? And do you see how it has been reduced to something so cheap in comparison? Behold! This is the measure of your renown heroes in apologetics! Peter introduced a counter-cultural approach to confronting religious disagreement in the face of authorities in a world where violence was the norm. Christian teachers today address a world in which this verse has already succeeded. Christians now answer with less force and vividness than the Bible permits them. They behave with a sinfully extreme level of gentleness and respect, to a point that amounts to permissiveness toward depravity and unbelief. There are indeed Christians in some parts of the world suffering the kind of persecution that Peter had in mind, but they are left without proper instruction because verses like 1 Peter 3:15 have been hijacked by church members sitting in first-class enjoying their premium apologetics!

Does this mean that we can attack people with insults when we defend the faith? Of course. Yes, of course you can do it, and sometimes you must do it. When it is appropriate in the context of the confrontation, it would be irresponsible to avoid it. Study the examples of the prophets and apostles, and the Lord Jesus, and learn when you should attack, how you should insult, and what tones or words to use. The Bible teaches against violence, not against assertive and even offensive speech. Peter referred to an answer toward authorities with official status, not peers. In free societies, even authorities such as officials, professors, and employers no longer hold the power that they had in a culture like the one Peter addressed. A professor or employer is more like a peer nowadays compared to a master in ancient times. A professor might still possess authority to punish a student, but not with violence and physical torture. Thus although we can still apply Peter's instruction,

we should adjust the approach in a biblical measure, because even a professor has become more like a peer. A policeman or a judge might possess more authority to punish, so Peter's instruction concerning respect toward human institutions becomes more applicable, but they are still nothing like the ancient officials in our free societies. Certainly it is often unnecessary to insult a professor or a policeman, and it is right to show respect to a husband. But I mean we should know what the verse really says. Of course, the word of God has so succeeded that now husbands also behave with gentleness and respect toward their wives. And when they do not, they are met with disapproval. This is a good thing. Let us acknowledge how the gospel has changed the world.

The standard charter for Christian apologetics is fraudulent, based on a distortion of Scripture. Naturally, the product is defective. Teachers of apologetics have been such bumbling idiots that they have created a burden that everyone else must carry. For example, I have had unbelievers attempt to use 1 Peter 3:15 to force me to engage with them, and to do it on their terms and at their convenience. This text does not allow them to make this demand, but they attempt to exploit how Christians use the verse. I know the truth about this verse, so I turn it back against them to show that they are illiterate fools who are too stupid to challenge me or the Christian faith. But of course, by doing so I have also exposed practically all other Christians as incompetent. This is not my fault. Blame the teachers of apologetics and the biblical scholars.

A Christian should be ready to answer someone like a government agent about his faith when he is interrogated, but Scripture does not mean that any ordinary citizen has the right to compel a Christian to answer for his faith on the non-Christian's terms and the non-Christian's schedule, and to do it all with "gentleness and respect." When sinners try to manipulate me with this verse, I have them exactly where I want them. I seize them by their throats and crush them, and they are destroyed. But they are merely using the Christian interpretation of the verse.

This distortion on 1 Peter 3:15 is not trivial, but very destructive for apologetics. It offers ammunition to non-Christians to manipulate believers, to twist their arms to do something that the Bible never commanded, and to do it with a creepy effeminate style that the Bible also never commanded. Christian apologists have been the greatest enemies of Christian apologetics. Our understanding of 1 Peter 3:15 is obvious and straightforward, and undeniable. Why haven't we seen other people teach this? The truth is that the teachers of apologetics are not very good at apologetics, and those who correct biblical distortions themselves commit biblical distortions. They do this because they have not sanctified Jesus as Lord in their hearts, and for all the apologetics they teach and perform, they are only pursuing their own agenda and tradition.

## 4. ON SPIRITUAL ATTACKS

### A Demonic Force

God revealed to me the calling to the ministry the moment I was converted. Before that time I had admired the work of preachers, but never imagined that I would become one, because I did not think that I would be worthy or good enough. But God is worthy, and God is good enough. He is the one who anoints us with his Spirit and makes us competent to speak for him. From the moment I was born again and became totally transformed in my spirit, I never doubted that God created me to be a preacher for the gospel of Jesus Christ. The calling of God became my identity. I experienced success immediately when I first started in the ministry of preaching and healing. My performance was strong and improving. Almost all the listeners had been Christians longer than I had been alive, but God gave me favor with them, and I gained their respect. Moreover, although I had never seen miracles of healing until that time, God honored his promises and performed his wonders by my words and my hands. All the regular attendees were healed within a short time and we had to launch out beyond the group to visit the sick.

No one in the group opposed me. After I made my case from the Scriptures for a ministry of faith and miracles, and after witnessing some startling demonstrations, the people were willing to listen with interest. However, Satan attacked me. For the first several weeks, each time I returned home I would be shrouded with a heavy oppression. I was familiar with spiritual attacks. At this time I had not attained the level of peace that I possessed since then. I was gaining strength day by day, but I was a new believer, and I was still battling the depression and other spiritual and mental infirmities that carried over from before I was born again. I was well on my way out, but at that time I was not completely free. Then this immense sense of oppression was added on top of other things that I was confronting in my life.

A distinct feature of this spiritual attack was a pressure -- like a cloud surrounding me and pressing in -- that attempted to make me lose a sense of reality regarding those hours of preaching and healing. This did not come in the form of an argument. There were no thoughts and no words. It was a forceful attempt to wipe out those hours and those events from my sense of reality. The memory would not feel real. Of course I was there in those services. I was the preacher. I saw the people and heard their responses. I was the one laying hands on the sick. I stretched out my hands and touched the people. I spoke to the diseases, and commanded them to depart. Miracles happened before our very eyes. I interviewed the people so that they could offer detailed and reliable testimonies about what happened to them. Some of them described what they felt was happening in their bodies as the power of God was healing them. I had the sermons, the miracles, and the testimonies on recording. All of this did not matter. Empirical evidence is powerless against a spiritual attack.

I had never believed in the reliability of sensations or empirical evidences. People think that I learned this from some Christian philosopher, but perhaps they consider this so unusual that they can only attach it to someone they know in their small circle of thinkers that takes a position they consider similar. I more or less thought this way many years



before I was born again. When I first read the Bible as a child, I saw that God would exploit what people can see and hear to deceive his enemies in battle. I also saw that when God spoke from heaven to endorse Jesus, some people thought that it merely thundered. My earliest memory of this was when I was about seven years old. This kind of thinking was reinforced when I learned about biblical healing, also around that age. This is the viewpoint that we must take the word of God as the truth, and interpret or even change our reality by faith. For example, the Bible says that even though Abraham was aware that he was too old to have a son, he did not become weak in faith, but he believed the promise of God so that he might become the father of nations. This kind of thinking became a positive foundation for my system of thought, because I did not only reject sensation and induction as reliable methods of discovery, but I also understood that the word of God is the truth by which I understand and interpret all other things.

Admittedly, at that time I did not have the vocabulary to put all of this in philosophical terms. I would learn that later. I also learned that when talking to Christians who consider themselves educated in religious matters, they cannot process information unless you use words that they invented to discuss those issues as academic topics. Using the accepted terms and phrases and categories would reduce the friction in conveying ideas. Nevertheless, I still do not speak in terms of theology and philosophy unless addressing a wider public audience that might include those who find it difficult to function without an abundance of man-made terms. I would arrive at knowledge from the word of God and certainty from the promise of Christ, but I did not call the process deduction or rational, and I did not call anything a first principle, an axiom, or the system of belief a worldview, and a whole dictionary of much more technical terms and phrases. It was just faith in the word of God. And when you believe and obey the word of God, miracles happen. It is still just faith in the word of God. And when you believe and obey the word of God, miracles still happen.

So as soon as I started being aware of these issues, and almost as soon as I started thinking at all, I had believed in a similar way as I do now. Naturally, my thinking as an infant was not nearly as complete and precise, but in generalities they were the same, because I saw what the Bible says about these things. The difference was that I could be aware of these things only as information. I was not born again, and I did not have the spiritual ability to put them into practice. As far as an unregenerate person could, I knew that the Bible was the truth. In fact, I even had a conscious awareness of an innate knowledge of God. I knew that there was a God, that he was the only God, that he had created all things. I also knew that mankind had sinned. I even knew that God had provided a savior, although I did not know the name of this savior, and I did not know that he had achieved salvation by means of sacrifice, death and resurrection. My earliest memory of knowing these things was when I was three years old, and as far as I could recall, that was before I heard about God or the Christian faith from anyone. Certainly nobody spoke to me about these things in such detail. I did not learn these things by sensation or human communication. Of course, as Paul indicated in his letter to the Romans, such innate knowledge is universal. Some people might be more conscious of it than others, and some might be conscious of more details than others. But the knowledge of God is universal. It is sufficient to condemn, but not

sufficient to save. Indeed, for many years and in many ways, I sinned against what I knew, until I was born again.

All the essentials of my current philosophy that people insist I learned from some philosopher, I knew between the age of three to seven. After that I would encounter much Christian teachings on these things – though never philosophy, but faith and healing. Still, I knew these things as information. I did not have the faith that comes only from God, and that would unite me to Jesus Christ, the faith that would open up all the blessings, possibilities, and powers that are in him. I knew one could receive the promises of God by faith, and walk in a reality that is contrary to present circumstances. But I did not have this faith yet. I knew about the ministry of healing since I was a child, that a person who has faith can heal the sick and cast out demons in the name of Jesus, but I could not have such a ministry until I was born again. Once I was born again and then received the Holy Spirit, I could begin right away. This has been a digression, but I wish to add this to my comment that empirical evidence is ineffective against a spiritual attack.

Satan wanted me to feel that none of it happened. I do not mean only the miracles. He wanted me to feel that none of it was real, that I did not preach, that I did not heal the sick, that no one was there, that even I was not there. He wanted to derail my ministry at its inception. You can say that such an attack did not make sense, but it did not have to. He was not trying to take away my sense of reality by empirical evidence or by an intellectual argument. He was trying to do it by raw spiritual force. Too few Christians understand both kinds of attacks. Some of them think that spiritual attacks are only non-intellectual, and you must depart from the realm of reason in order to win. The others call this group mindless fanatics and assume that all attacks are intellectual. When an attack comes, argue it away with the Scriptures. Usually those who think they know a lot of theology, or even teach theology, are weak in spiritual power, such that the tiniest push makes them fall over. Then they write books on how it is not their fault that they live defeated lives, and that it is all the will of God. Of course, these people do not know theology as they ought, and they do not practice the theology of Jesus Christ -- the theology of ultimate power, the theology of resurrection, the theology of the throne.

When your understanding about this is incomplete, or if you insist on closing your mind to a side of the issue that you do not wish to admit, then you remain vulnerable. All spiritual attacks are intelligible, in the sense that they can be understood and discussed. And in discussing them we might be more prepared to confront them. All attacks are intellectual at least in this sense. They can be defined and discussed by proper doctrines. But not all spiritual attacks are intellectual in the sense that you can argue them away. In some cases, arguments are either irrelevant, or you can win all the arguments you want and still lose the fight. This is because the enemy is not arguing with you at all.

Suppose I attack you and shove you to the ground. Everything about the event is intelligible. We can have an intellectual discussion about it. We can debate all aspects about it, such as the reason for the attack, the physics of the event, and the moral issues related to it. It is not a mystical occurrence. However, I have not attacked you with an argument, and you cannot defend yourself with an argument. There is no intellectual content in the

attack itself. If there is any argument at all, you can win the argument, and still end up on the ground, defeated. The attack is physical. I attack you with physical force. You could defend yourself only with physical force. An intellectual understanding about physical force can help you leverage your physical abilities. But to meet the attack and overcome it, you must confront it with a stronger physical force.

In the same way, some spiritual attacks do not make sense, since there are no thoughts or arguments driving them, and what thoughts they pressure you to accept, often find no basis in your current circumstances or expectations, even contrary to what your situation should lead you to think. The attacks are either non-rational or anti-rational. However, they can feel extremely forceful. They can cause a person to lose all sense of reality, joy, or hope. An intellectual response will help. It will provide a solid foundation for the proper reaction. It will help you leverage what resources you have to defend yourself. But by itself it remains incomplete. Again, it is because the spiritual attack in fact carries no argument. It does not even attempt to claim the rational high ground. You can debate it, and if you can find any point to latch onto, you can even win the debate. But the attack will just shrug and push you off the cliff anyway. It is not trying to debate you. It never cared about the truth. Some attacks indeed come with thoughts and arguments, but it is intertwined with this same spiritual force, so that even if you win the argument, the outcome is the same. It shrugs and shoves you off the cliff.

When Saul was harassed by an evil spirit, David did not argue with the demon. He was anointed with the Spirit of God, and when he played music, there was spiritual power that compelled the spirit to leave by force. Jesus did not debate the demons. He did not explain to them that they were wrong in possessing their victims and making their lives miserable. If the demons did not already know this, they would have been happy to discover how evil they were. Jesus did not explain to them that he was the Son of God, and that these spirits should have been afraid of him. In fact, they already knew this, and cried out and persisted until he commanded them to come out of the people they occupied. He cast them out by force, or as he said, by the finger of God. As he explained, a strong man can guard a house, but then a stronger man comes and binds the first man and takes over the house. What about diseases? Jesus did not persuade them to leave. He would rebuke a fever, and the fever would leave. A storm attacked his boat. It could have at least killed the disciples, but not by an abundance of arguments. It did not come to debate them. Jesus rebuked the storm, and the storm ceased.

Consider the girl who had a spirit of divination. She followed Paul and his companions, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who declare to you the way of salvation." This attack was indeed accompanied by words and thoughts. Did Paul respond with an intellectual counterattack? Did Paul debate her out of town? What could he have said? What was there to argue about? Was he supposed to say that they were not servants of God, or that his God was not the Most High, or that they did not come to tell them the way of salvation? Her statement was not false, and there was nothing to argue about. Yet it was a spiritual attack from a spirit of divination. How would your theology handle this? How will you do your apologetics when your enemies, including the demons, agree with you? My theology would tell me to cast out the demon, and my apologetics would know

how to do it, and have prepared me with the spiritual power to make it happen. And this is what Paul did: "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." He overpowered the demon. He won. The spirit left the girl and she lost that spiritual power that drove her. When Jesus encountered people who were possessed with demons, sometimes the spirits would cry out, "What are you doing here, Son of the Most High God?" Jesus did not say, "Well, you see, I am here because..." or "No, I am not the Son of God." What would your apologetics look like in this situation? The demons were rightly afraid, and they correctly said that he was the Son of God. Behold his "apologetics" -- "Shut up and come out of him!" If you think apologetics is only about arguments, you do not know biblical apologetics. There must be arguments, but these arguments are intertwined with miracle power. If there is no power, you have a false apologetics, because there is no such thing as a biblical vindication of God without the participation of divine power.

The temptation of Jesus likely involved both intellectual argument and spiritual power. We should indeed assume that both things are involved in spiritual attacks, only that some attacks focus more on intellectual harassment and deception, while others turn up the spiritual force applied against the person that can be effective apart from any thoughts and arguments. The intellectual exchange between Jesus and Satan was elaborate. Jesus answered the devil with the Scriptures, and then the devil tried to distort a promise of God to trick Jesus, who then exposed the deception with another statement from the Scriptures. Nevertheless, do not forget that at the end of Matthew's account of the incident, Jesus forcefully told Satan to leave. Then the Scriptures says, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit." It was not only a clash of theological wits or moral character, but also of spiritual power. Suppose you affirm, "Praise God! According to the Bible, the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." Then Satan whispers, "Yes, but you are not righteous." And you counter, "God has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. I am not righteous in myself, but my righteousness is not considered. Jesus himself is my righteousness. God declared him righteous and raised him from the dead." You are correct. You have won the intellectual argument. We must not undermine what you have achieved. However, unless you are strong in spirit, when under demonic pressure, you might not even manage to convince yourself. The victory is not complete, and genuine freedom eludes you. If you have ever been attacked this way, you should know what I mean. Then, some attacks are almost purely spiritual. It is as if someone punches you in the face and refuses to tell you why. There is no argument to win. The only way to win is to punch him back and knock him down.

Power. Power is what you need. Christian orthodoxy is accustomed to promote a culture of false humility and sacrifice, and insanely stupid suffering, and along with this, also a contempt for power in the spirit. If it talks about power at all, it is a power to endure, and not a power to overcome, to alter reality, to change suffering into prosperity and victory. This situation exists because the Church has lived under the deception of Satan. It is God's power that overcomes the wicked one, and never man's endless patience and senseless suffering. Power from heaven is what Satan fears. He is not nervous when Christians repeatedly – and heroically! – ram their heads into a wall of their own making. He laughs at their random sacrifice. He is the one who tricks them into it. He wants us to feel like we are spiritual and serving God when the truth is that we have been immobilized, exerting a

lot of effort but all the time running madly in a small circle. Satan uses a theology of weakness to make Christians his pet hamsters. Almost all orthodox theology in church history has been infected with this theology of weakness. Almost all church heroes, both historic and modern, have been accomplices to it. Christians think they have started some kind of revolution when the only thing revolving for them is a hamster wheel. They exert so much effort, only to kill themselves with their own theology of unbelief and defeat. Does the hamster know that it is not going anywhere, that it is not really moving forward? Does he know that it is all for exercise and entertainment? If it does, then it is smarter than the Christians. Their theological efforts amount to mere exercise and entertainment. Theology done correctly will move forward in power, producing tangible effects and miracles.

Power. Power is what you need. You must have it. Then you must have more of it. If your theology limits your power, throw it away. It is false. True theology ought to stimulate a crazed desire for spiritual power, and a love for others to benefit them with this power. Never be embarrassed to seek spiritual power. This sense of shame is also from Satan. Power is the thing that defeats him. Jesus said, "You shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Paul wrote that there is a power that works within him mightily. He said that God will perform more than we ask or think by the power that he causes to work within us. The Christian life is about power, no less than it is about love, or humility, or truth. This is obvious when we read the Scriptures. But Christians are only ashamed to seek power. And then like unthinking crabs, they tear down those who wish to climb out of that theological prison to a world of power in Christ. They are the glory of Satan! Christians even use the doctrines concerning love, humility, and sacrifice to attack the doctrines of power, faith, healing, and prosperity. It is a simple deception, but Satan never needed to do more. Christians like these become nothing more than stupid crabs and hamsters to him. He laughs and chants their Latin phrases along with them. "Corem Deo! Corem Deo!" he roars with delight. "Jesus I know, Paul I know, and Vincent I know, but who are you?" If we are truly humble, we will seek power -- power from God to help us. If we truly love God and people, we will seek power -- power to serve God and to bless people. But no! Christians shout, "Let us weep, suffer, and be poor, for tomorrow we die!"

This is why the Church has been feeble throughout the centuries. It has been tricked. It has been satisfied as long as it could keep thinking that it has the moral high ground. Satan does not even want the moral high ground. He wants to win. The prophets and apostles, and most of all Jesus himself, emphasized the power of God. Jesus was the least jealous about his power to work miracles. He told his disciples to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. Then he told more disciples to do these things. Then he told his disciples not to stop even those whom he never commissioned to do these things. And then he said that all who believe in him can do these things, and even greater things than these. Jesus wanted everybody to work miracles, so that the Father may receive honor through the things done by the name of his Son Jesus Christ. But Christians are most ashamed to seek spiritual, divine, miracle power. Why? Let us wake up! Power is what defeats Satan. Power from God is what makes things happen for the gospel.

It is often said, "The Scriptures say that God is love, but it does not say that God is power." Actually, it does. It says this in a way that is stronger than most Christians would want to

admit, and in a context that is more intense than "God is love" in the letter of John. Jesus declared, "From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62). In other contexts, the word refers to miraculous power, such as when Jesus said, "Power has gone out of me" to heal the woman with the bleeding disease, or when he said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Power. This is what Jesus called God. He did not say that he would be seated at the right hand of Love or Wisdom. He did not use a different word for power to call him Authority, but he called him Power, raw ability and force. No matter what hermeneutical excuse you attempt to use, I know all the tricks and I have already considered them, and the fact remains that in this place he did not refer to God as anything else but POWER. God is Power as much as Jesus is Word. Where is Jesus? Power. He is next to Power. What kind of power? Power for miracles. Power over demons. Power to rule in creation. Christians are ashamed of power. And if you are ashamed of power, you are ashamed of God, for God is Power. If you refuse to seek power, you refuse you seek God. If you mock miracle power as if it is some sideshow, you mock God as if he is a sideshow.

Everything else that Christians have been saying about "God is love" can be said with even greater emphasis about Power. Do you worship the one who is on the throne? Do you raise your hands and praise the one whose right hand is your Lord? Good! But your Lord called him Power. Now do you still worship him? Do you worship Power? Are you now zealous to excel in power no less than you wish to excel in love? Or do you shrink back and insist on calling him something else? We do not worship power, as in some impersonal force. But Power? Certainly, we worship Power, as in God who is All-Power. If you do not worship Power in this sense, you do not worship God at all. As the Scriptures say, "No one has ever seen God, but the One who is himself God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." If you reject the God that Jesus himself declared, which is Power -- miracle power -- you will burn in hell. But Christians are ashamed of power. They are ashamed of such a God, who is All-Power. How often have you heard it said, "God has power, but God is love"? Jesus denied this. God is power at least as much as God is love. Power himself is on the throne, and Jesus is at Power's right hand. This is the gospel. Accept this, or make up some other religion.

Satan has convinced Christians that it is unholy and unspiritual to seek spiritual power. But Jesus is at the right hand of Power. To seek the one on the throne is to seek Power. Thus it is most holy and most spiritual to seek spiritual power, no less than it is holy and spiritual to pursue divine love, because -- you guessed it -- God is love. Of course Satan has also tried to hinder Christians from walking in love, but it seems he has never tried to convince them that it is unholy and unspiritual to walk in love. Power is what he is afraid of. And love remains ineffective without the spiritual and miracle power that it is supposed to wield. If you love as God loves, you will want to preach the truth, heal the sick, and cast out demons. Power lets you do these things. Compassion is the strongest catalyst in the ministry of healing, but without power, it is either counterfeit compassion or compassion frustrated. Love and Power are not in conflict, but if you walk in love, you will seek the power. Pray that God would grant you, "according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man." Power. You must have truth as

the foundation. Then you must rise up in power. All this discussion about power is theological truth. But it will not release power if you only debate it and sit on it. Truth will release power when you boldly affirm it and act on it. Do it.

Let me finish the story. Satan wanted to attack me and sift me like wheat, but I saw through his method. He exerted spiritual pressure upon me to make me lose a sense of reality about what happened at the beginning of my ministry. He did not argue. He did not send elaborate words and thoughts. He attacked me with brute force. So I did not try to argue. I did not call the people and tried to confirm: "I was there, right? Did you hear me preach? You saw what happened?" I did not return to the place and visualize what I remembered. I did not even replay the recordings and watch the videos that were on my desk. All this might have provided some superficial relief, but soon I would have lost all sense of reality about these confirmations as well. Satan did not claim that there were no evidences and testimonies. He tried to wrest away my sense of reality about the events by force.

Instead of seeking empirical evidences and testimonies, I did two things. First, I returned to the word of God. The Scriptures. He commanded me to preach the gospel to every person. He commanded me to teach all nations. What if God had summoned me to his throne in a vision and issued a mandate, in distinct speech specifying the nature of my ministry? And what if Jesus had appeared to me on a different occasion and affirmed another aspect of my work? Suppose these things had happened, I did not appeal to them. If these things had happened, I did not appeal to them even though they would be experiences of the spirit akin to what we would have in heaven, and not empirical evidences and experiences of the senses. Instead, I returned to the Scriptures. He commanded me to lay hands on the sick, and promised me that the sick shall recover. Even before I did these things for the first time, I was certain of the ministry of preaching and healing on the basis of his word alone. Nothing changed after I experienced these things that I was already sure about before I experienced them. My faith was in the word of God before I experienced what it says and after I experienced what it says. Experience adds nothing, removes nothing, and changes nothing. Satan's attack made empirical evidences and testimonies irrelevant, but then I made his attack irrelevant by returning to the word of God regardless of my sense of reality about experiences. Second, I stood up in power against the enemy: "Satan, of course all that happened. The word of God is true, and when I obeyed the word of God, he was there to confirm his word with signs following. And I will continue to preach the word and heal the sick. I will continue regardless of what I see, what I hear, and what I feel. But I believed the same way even before any of this happened. The word of God is the same. Now Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ I command you to cease this attack and leave me." The word of God is true. As the Bible says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." I resisted the devil, and he fled from me. The pressure lifted, and that strange sense of a loss of reality disappeared. This happened several more times, and every time I resisted him in the same way. After that he never attacked me like this again.

Lest you imagine it was a weak attempt against me, only three years before that time, before I was born again, Satan attacked me with a much weaker spiritual pressure, a much weaker sense of meaninglessness and lack of reality -- and I wanted to kill myself. And from that time it would happen on and off until I was born again by God's power. Then I began to

gain the upper hand. This time he attacked me with ten times as much pressure, and I brushed him off in less than an hour. I did it a few more times, and he stopped forever. I am not boasting about myself, because obviously I could not stand up to him before. But as a follower of Jesus Christ, it was so easy to defeat him in a frontal clash that the Lord said, "Do not be too impressed that you have power over demons, but rejoice that your name is written in heaven." I hope that you are not too impressed either, because you will need to do the same thing for yourself when he attacks. No, never underestimate Satan. Don't be smug and stupid. Be sober, be vigilant. Be smart. But when you cling to Christ and draw power from him, then you should defeat him easily, just as Christ could defeat him easily. It is his power and his name that grant you the victory.

### **A Deeper Deception**

Spiritual attacks can come designed to produce different effects. Before I was born again, one came as an irrational and extreme form of depression and purposelessness, nudging me toward suicide. After I was born again, I affirmed my place and purpose in Christ, and became free from it in about 18 months. The Holy Spirit was my therapist and untangled more than 16 years of hurts and fears, and rage and sadness and confusion. At the beginning of my work in preaching and healing, one came as a forceful sense of unreality. I affirmed God's teachings and promises as my sole reality, and I commanded the attack to cease and dispatched the enemy in short measure. This was the approach of rationalism, but with power. Another effect of a spiritual attack can be arbitrary or exaggerated anger, often entirely irrational, that ends in much regret, and that cannot be soothed by reason, since it was never fueled by reason. Another can be nagging fears and doubts, or intense hatred and blasphemous feelings and thoughts. It does not matter what effects spiritual attacks are producing in you. For now it is enough to understand what I mean by these spiritual attacks. Our discussion will help you with all of them. We have in mind an intense spiritual pressure or force that is often disproportionate to the thoughts and arguments associated with it. In fact, it may come almost entirely apart from thoughts and arguments, and void of definite intellectual content to grasp onto or to interact with. This could intensify the despair in those who lack understanding in spiritual things. Sometimes many thoughts and arguments may arise as effects of these attacks, or it may seem that many thoughts and arguments come along with them, but you also find that the feeling or pressure, the despair or depression, all remain even when you have overcome the thoughts and arguments. This is because these attacks are not about right, but about might. This is why some of you are able to think through the issues again and again, but still fail to become free from oppression. Some fool can yell " $1 + 1 = 3!$ " and punch you in the face. You can scream "No!  $1 + 1 = 2!$ " but you still get punched in the face. If you want him to stop spouting mathematical errors and damaging your pretty face, you must knock him out.

If you are a follower of Christ, born again by the word of God, I condemn any suggestion that you might have to live with the effects of a demonic attack all your life, whether we are talking about rage, terror, depression, blasphemy, or any such thing. I condemn any suggestion that there would likely be an extended struggle. You most assuredly do not need to live with it for very long, not to say all your life. This is utter foolishness. Treasonous. For this reason, I must denounce most Christian teachers and writers that comment on this



subject. I condemn them and charge them with sin. Listen. This is one of the most important things you must know about this topic. The lie is so pervasive and protected by Christians that what I am asserting is heresy to human tradition -- that you can experience total freedom in Christ in a matter of minutes, and even with extremely entrenched issues, sometimes days or weeks, but no attack should persist for years, and certainly not entire lifetimes. This is the truth. Christ has set you free. Let unbelief and tradition -- and those who cling to them -- burn in hell.

The lie has been partly propelled by hero worship, or idolatry. You might have read studies about Christian leaders, perhaps Spurgeon or some other figure, who battled depression or some other spiritual issue all their lives. Rather than holding firm the promises and achievements of Jesus Christ as their standard, and then evaluating the experiences of Christian leaders by this standard, they justify and even beautify the experiences of these leaders and reinterpret the promises and achievements of Jesus Christ. It is relatively unimportant whether we have an exact account of the experiences and feelings of these Christian leaders. They are accountable to God, not to us. However, if we suppose that what has been reported, sometimes in their own words, are indeed accurate, then we must conclude that so many historic heroes of the faith were deceived in this area. They utterly failed to receive by faith the promises and powers of Christ. They did not live up to the gospel that they preached. They were weak. They were wrong. They were defeated. You do not need to live like they did.

Let them be as great as they were, where they were truly great, but if they were depressed all their lives, they were failures in this thing. And if they had to fight blasphemous thoughts all their lives, or if they were harassed with doubts all their lives, they were defeated. Do you want the truth? You probably do not, but here is the truth: If they lived like this for many years or even their whole lives, we can be sure that they had other problems in their faith and doctrine as well. You only see the tip of the iceberg, or you only allow yourself to see this much. But should I destroy a weak brother to set you free from idolatry? The idolatry is your sin. Destroy the idol, and you will worship some other man. There is no need to dismiss their accomplishments, although it is difficult to say that spectacular defeat in one essential area does not diminish what appears to be success in other areas, since our lives cannot be divided like this. But I am not trying to take anything away from them. I want us to think about ourselves. They are dead. We are alive. (Current religious leaders who are worshiped as heroes are alive, but they live as dead men because of their unbelief and tradition.) Just as they are accountable to God, and not to us, we are accountable to God, not to them. Still less are we accountable to those who worship them. We must think about how we must now live as followers of Christ. We cannot use the failure of others as standard for our success.

The miserable examples of spiritual heroes are supposed to offer comfort to us today. This is the thing that perhaps no one told you -- it is just a deeper level of deception. Just when you become ready to throw off the yoke of slavery, a gentle teacher comes along and declares, "This great one suffered depression all his life." Wait a minute! Why are you telling me this? What does that have to do with me? Nothing! This is deception. It is a deeper level of deception camouflaged under the more obvious one. It is another demonic

attack underneath the first demonic attack. Satan whispers to you, "You are worthless. Life has no meaning." You become depressed. As you seek for answers, or as you struggle, sometimes gaining ground and sometimes losing ground, a messenger of Satan suggests, "Be comforted. This our hero never totally triumphed. This will probably happen to you too. Let this encourage you to keep hope and not give up!" But is this what the Scriptures say? I do not even know this fellow. I do not know what he truly believed. I do not know what he did to attempt victory, if he did anything useful at all. Maybe he did not believe the gospel promises that could have delivered him. Maybe he did not do what Jesus said. Why must his experience -- his failure -- define my experience? Why must I allow his defeat to ruin my life? I am not supposed to judge God's word even by my own experience, and now you want me to judge God's word by someone else's experience? What kind of super moron do you think I am? Or are you the super moron? It is suspicious, isn't it? It is a scam. It is a trick to make you stop fighting the attack, or to fight it half-heartedly, or to fight it without expecting a speedy and complete success. It is an attempt by Satan to install a demonic dungeon under the stronghold that he has constructed in your mind.

Prolonged struggle can easily turn into "the devil made me do it" excuse. The same Christians would expose those who claim that the devil made them murder, rape, and steal. They would say, "Perhaps the devil tempted you to do it, but you are still responsible. You could resist, especially if you are a Christian, but you did not. God will punish the devil for tempting people to sin, but he will hold you accountable for surrendering to him." They would not excuse even someone genuinely possessed by the devil, if they believe in such a thing. Then they would turn around and tell you that the devil might keep you depressed all your life, or give you evil thoughts all your life, or that we do not understand why this continues, or that God is doing this to you for his glory. Our heroes experienced the same thing. Do not worry about it too much. But...they do not say this to those who molest children over and over and over again. Or maybe they do? If they do, I withdraw a charge of inconsistency, but then I insist that such scums should be excommunicated immediately, and if it is found that their counsel encouraged continuing criminal activities in a manner that violates the law, they should be reported to the authorities. So these Christian teachers and writers that claim to help people turn out to be either super stupid or super evil, if not both.

The same thing applies to thoughts, since thoughts are mental actions or events. The devil can tempt you to perform certain mental actions or verbal actions. If you are a non-Christian, you are still culpable if you comply. If you are a Christian, you can overcome him. The Bible says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If he does not flee from you, then you are not resisting. If you keep saying the devil makes you do it, then the truth is that you want to have these thoughts, but you know they are wrong, so that you are using the excuse to have it both ways. You perform the mental and verbal sins that you wish to commit, and then you make yourself into a victim. Even sincere believers can be tempted to use this excuse, but they would be less tempted if they knew that there is a better way, that they could in fact be free. Just then Christians preachers and scholars come along and tell them that even the supposedly best believers could suffer lifelong problems of depression and such things. This reinforces Satan's temptations to sin and to persist in sin.

I tell you, there is a way to be free. Jesus is the way, and there is no excuse to suffer very long. You say, "The devil made me do it." If you do not stop him, then you are that devil.

People, of course, have more confidence in their heroes than in Jesus Christ, and so they will oppose what I am saying. But Jesus Christ is my hero. To be honest, I really do not care about your heroes. If they were great, that does not make me great. If they were defeated, they were the ones that failed. It has no effect on me. Can't we learn from them? Well, if this is the kind of lesson you are taking from them, then NO THANKS AND GET OUT. Get out right now before I kick you out, you stupid piece of orthodox trash. Wrap yourself in that garbage bag you call a historic creed and throw yourself down a cliff. Why are you still here? No one needs you. I despise those who call themselves followers of Christ but in fact worship someone else. They are worthless not only as believers, if they are believers, but they are worthless also as human beings in general. They are trash. They are the rats of society. I speak clearly about this so that you will have a chance to untangle yourself from this deception. Whatever Satan is doing to attack you, you can overcome it. In Christ, you can have total peace in mind and in spirit. It is easy to attain. Jesus said that he left us with his joy and peace. He said that he has overcome the world.

Christian traditional teachings vilify the legitimate expectation of swift and total deliverance, and an unwavering happiness in Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches an "unspeakable joy and full of glory," but unbelief and tradition cannot even promise a speakable joy and some of glory. Now unspeakable sadness and full of humiliation is the gospel! Such "orthodoxy" has contributed to millions of defeated believers and ineffective ministries, leading to global historic failures in convincing multitudes with the gospel, and thus allowing hosts of humanity to remain in sin and burn in hell. Such "orthodoxy" has contributed to poverty, sickness, even suicides, since it allows suffering and oppression to continue even when the people could be easily delivered. All of this is counted against the "Our hero endured this all his life and never really got over it, so take comfort!" people, and also all others who propagate the same scam in different ways. They have blood on their hands. If they even twitch their stupid mouths to defend against this, they add to their condemnation.

Renounce the error of idolatry and tradition. Abandon the pride and admit the unbelief. Then return to the way of faith and power. Preach complete and immediate deliverance to those who believe in Christ Jesus. The Bible says that the gospel is the power of God to save those who believe. It is not a mere explanation from God to comfort those who are oppressed. It is power to save those who are oppressed. The traitors among us have made the gospel the power of man to excuse those who suffer, and to excuse those who disbelieve. You can be free from whatever oppression you suffer. You can be free soon, even today. It will take some time to increase in strength and establish yourself in a place of safety, and even that should not take too long, but immediate deliverance from oppression is yours. Then renew your mind, affirm your place, and remain happy for the rest of your life. Jesus Christ has set you free. All oppression was absorbed by him and destroyed on the cross. If you are a slave to Satan, you are a willing slave. As Jesus said to a man, "Do you want to be healed?" Come out from that false theology that has ruined so many lives and so many souls. Come out from that bloody orthodoxy.

## **A Special Category**

Compassion is essential to every kind of healing ministry. Toward those who are eager to listen, and who make no excuses, we can exercise patience. But never allow our patience to become their excuse. Now those who suffer attacks of blasphemous thoughts and feelings belong to a special category. I would not give it time at all. All blasphemous thoughts, feelings, and words must be stopped now. Today. "Fight it for a few years and you will eventually win." No. "Struggle with it for a lifetime and you are still the best Christian." No. "That's just how it is with some people. God is using it for his glory." No. These are all lies. Again, such counsel installs a deeper level of deception that delays deliverance, that allows you to continue the blasphemous tendencies and thoughts. If you permit yourself false comfort, you will only manufacture a delay that does not need to be there. It must end now. All of it. You must regard the matter with urgency and refuse all counsel that permits any delay to total deliverance. Perhaps a gradual reduction of blasphemies? No. Ten years later? No. When you get to heaven? No. Now. Take that in-depth analysis of somebody else's lifelong depression and give it to your satanist neighbor, because that's what he uses for his funny toilet reading. Accept nothing except teachings that insist on swift and total deliverance, and joy, and peace, and spiritual strength in Christ. Satan has attacked you with lies. You have surrounded yourself with more lies to comfort yourself. "Do you want to be healed?" The first step is to remove the lies. Today.

What if this thing continues for a while longer because of your lack of strength and knowledge? Don't give up. Don't kill yourself. That's not what I am suggesting at all. You don't win by getting more defeated. But I cannot offer you any comfort or excuse to remain in blasphemy. Whatever I say, you know in your heart you need to stop it today, not later. So I am just being honest with you. But you can win. You can win quickly. Remember that something like this is not only a matter of arguments, because the episodes are often senseless and irrational. There is nothing to latch onto and argue it to death. Or the thing remains even if you can debate it and win. It is often more a matter of spiritual power. A punch in the face. If you can reach someone who understands spiritual things, he can resist the devil with you, but even if he can join you at the beginning, you will need to learn this yourself in order to fend off further attacks. The devil will return to test you several more times until you demonstrate your resolve, and until you have built up sufficient inner strength. This is true with all kinds of spiritual attacks, like depression and others.

The Christian is able to end any spiritual attack today by the power of Christ that is at his disposal. If you dispute this, you are the one who has to sin longer, and suffer longer. I am free. I am just telling you what I know. There is one thing that even an unbeliever can do today, and that is to stop listening to false and weak theology. If you get stabbed with a knife, you don't drink cyanide to cure yourself just because it aligns with how you already feel. It makes the situation much worse. Almost all the best regarded counsel amounts to spiritual cyanide. If you do not stop drinking that today, then there is no help for you. By your action, you testify that you want to live in this condition. You embrace the sin, the depression, the blasphemy, all of it. Even what is considered the best biblical counseling approach, one that purportedly confronts the individual with Scripture, is based on a

theology that rejects the power of God. It turns out to be another concoction of spiritual poison. Stop consuming spiritual poison today. Do not listen to that sermon everyone is raving about. Do not finish that book that adds to your theological street cred. It is foolish to boast that you have consumed more poison than your friends. It does not mean you are educated. It means you are stupid. What good is it, if a man reads the whole Christian library, and by doing that, loses his own soul? Consume only faith and victory. Drink the sweet elixir of Christ.

Now it is common for Satan to harass people by suggesting that they have committed the unpardonable sin. At this point, theology will either sink us into a deeper level of deception, or it will offer a clear statement that removes all deception, to relieve those who ought to be relieved. Almost 100 percent of historically accepted orthodox theology has added to the deception. Christian preachers and thinkers respond by calling the spiritual attack a deception, but their explanation amounts to either reducing the words of Jesus to irrelevance or outright contradicting him on the subject. They claim that this sin is either a persistent and permanent rejection of Christ or it is something that is impossible to commit. This is supposed to be the truth that sets people free. However, this universal teaching is false. Jesus said that if you blaspheme the Son, you can be forgiven, but if you blaspheme the Spirit, you cannot be forgiven. He did not say that if you blaspheme the Son intensely and endlessly, then eventually that is to blaspheme the Spirit. He clearly distinguished between speaking against the Son and speaking against the Spirit. He was referring to those who opposed his ministry of healing and called the work of the Spirit the work of a demon, so that they indirectly spoke against the Spirit and called the Spirit himself a demon. These are different sins because they speak against two different objects or persons. The Pharisees were doing it left and right, in front of everybody, and spreading the blasphemy around like butter. It was easy to commit. It was so easy to commit that when he warned about this sin, Jesus said that “on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.” He did not say that the Pharisees were making scholarly premeditated blasphemies. He warned that a “careless word” could be blasphemy. This is the truth about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

The popular antidote for this attack is in fact poison. It attempts to comfort people by dismissing what Jesus said. Some people have indeed committed this sin of speaking against the Holy Spirit, and they will burn in hell forever and ever and ever. The proper way to face the spiritual attack is to study what Jesus said about it to obtain the correct definition. Then if you have never committed it, you will know for sure because any sin you have done will not fit the definition. And the truth has set you free. If you have committed the sin, then it does not change anything even if someone lies to you about it to make you feel better. If you have indeed done it, then no one can help you. I have no authority to change what Jesus said. And if you have committed this sin, I have no power to save you. What I know is that it is possible to commit this sin. Perhaps your pastor does it every Sunday when he criticizes those preachers on television as you shout “Amen!” Perhaps your shelf is full of books by scholars who blaspheme the Spirit in every volume as they persecute those who have faith in God for the ministry of healing and miracles. I don’t know what trash you read. What I know is that you cannot fight deception with deception. When you do, Satan wins. Either the second deception replaces the first, so that

the person thinks he is no longer deceived when he is taken even deeper, or the second deception reinforces the first deception, and also takes the person deeper. Either way, compound deceptions make the person more stubborn in his delusion and it becomes harder for him to escape. Satan knows this, and Christian preachers and thinkers have been his accomplices.

This is often a very religious sin. The people of the world usually do not care to speak against the Holy Spirit, if they even know there is a Holy Spirit. If they witness a ministry or miracle of healing and such, they might marvel at the reality and compassion of God, and often become followers of Christ, while others might remain skeptical without calling the ministry the work of demons and wickedness. Some might indeed commit the unpardonable sin at this point, but they are rare in comparison. Most of the people who commit this sin are church leaders and church members. Like the Pharisees, they are those who consider themselves experts in religious matters, and zealous to defend the orthodox faith. It would not occur to them that they have committed this sin, and that they will burn in hell forever. They are so self-righteous that this is the last thing on their minds. They consider themselves the most educated and the most faithful, the Christian elite. Theologians extraordinaire. Apologists supreme. They will harden their hearts and continue their wickedness. And they will burn in hell. If you tell them this, they will become enraged with you, do some of their apologetics on you...and then burn in hell. They did that to Jesus too, and then they burned in hell.

Of course, Satan incites some people to think that they have committed this unpardonable sin when the truth is that they have not. They become pressed down and extremely fearful. Some of them become crazed and obsessed. Some choose the way of denial. Others choose to resign themselves to a life of wickedness. Some commit suicide. It is possible for Satan to cause such damage because people are not clear about what this sin is. The solution is to restate the correct definition of the sin, rebuke the devil in the name of Jesus, and set them free. The most common reaction is destructive. Preachers would rush to offer false assurance, nullifying the words of Jesus in the process, so that even those who have committed this sin would think that they have not done it. This response in itself is blasphemy against Jesus Christ, because it shoves him out of the way in order to introduce a lie to make people feel better about themselves, whether or not they should have relief. And the lie makes it more likely for people to commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. People would assume that whatever they have done or whatever they want to do, it is not the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, or that they can be forgiven even if they were to speak against the Holy Spirit, to imply that he is a demon, to call his work in healing the sick and casting out demons deceptive, fanatical, against orthodoxy, or some such thing. They would not think to avoid the sin. In fact, they would think that they perform God a service by doing some of their apologetics on those who follow the example of Jesus, when their whole enterprise is a ministry of blaspheming the Holy Spirit! All this certainly sounds ridiculous to them. See, it is because they are deceived, and they are deceiving others.

For our purpose I have no interest in specifying individuals or groups that might have committed this sin. I might have my opinion, but you can judge for yourself based on what

they say. Examples are easy to find. Here I am only telling you what Jesus said. If you do not want to hear it from me, read what he said about it. He said that if you speak against the Holy Spirit, such as to imply that the ministry of healing is the work of a demon, a work of evil, then you are finished. Taking what he said elsewhere about God's judgment against sin, we deduce that if someone makes a habit of doing this or even build a ministry dedicated to calling the Holy Spirit demonic, then he will suffer more extreme punishment when he burns in hell. All this is a direct application of what Jesus said. You are not accountable to me. If you do not believe me, forget about me and go read this from him. Believe him. But if he said the same thing I am telling you, then more than a few people are in deep trouble. Oh, they are in so much trouble. They will suffer and hurt in ways that I cannot describe or imagine. The pain and anguish will never end. It will never become dull for them. It will be as fresh and intense ten thousand years later as it shall be on the first day. And it will keep going and going and going.

Some people have criticized me for agreeing with Jesus on the definition of this sin and on the fact that it is possible to commit. They blame me for troubling the faith of some and instilling a sense of hopelessness in them. But...I am not troubled and I am not hopeless. How come? Because I have never committed this sin! If the people are troubled by a clear definition of the sin rather than liberated by it, then they are the ones in the wrong, not me. In fact, I have done very well. The ones who blame me are those who perpetuate the lie, and thus continue to allow more and more people to commit this unpardonable sin. I have troubled some people by repeating what Jesus said and agreeing with him, and this is because I have done well. In contrast, my critics are smoothing the way for people to slide into hell and burn forever. They are the problem, not me. Let those who ought to be disturbed, be disturbed. Let those who ought to lose hope, lose hope. In fact, many people instinctively know that the common teaching on this sin is false, so that even if they take hold of it as the only lifeline, the worry remains at the back of their minds. On the other hand, anyone who has not committed this sin no longer needs to wonder, because we know what this sin is, and so anyone who has not done it is fortified by the truth. Satan can no longer find any vulnerability to trick us into thinking that we have done something unpardonable when we have not done it. This is what I have done for the people.

If you are disturbed when I define the sin of adultery directly from the words of Scripture, how is that my fault? Why blame me? Is it not because you have probably committed adultery? If you have not committed adultery, you would be liberated by a proper definition of it, especially if you have been confused about it before. A burden would lift from your shoulders. The dark cloud of condemnation would depart. You would thank me. You would share the teaching with other people. If you become troubled and blame me, you bring condemnation upon yourself, because it is as if you are admitting to something. To criticize me for this would be more like a confession than some heroic attempt to defend everybody's faith and feelings. Either you have committed adultery, or you have not defined it correctly, and you are angry because I have made you look bad. As Paul said, "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" The more you complain, the more guilty you appear. Why are those people disturbed by a definition of sin? Have they done something that they should be worried about? If so, why weren't they disturbed before? No one showed them the truth. You see, I have done so well. Perhaps you should blame

your conscience instead, because it agrees with me more than you will admit. I must talk about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and tell it like it is. People are so dismissive about this ultimate sin, and some are even eager to commit this sin, and I do not want their blood on my hands.

### **A Sin Unpardonable**

Practically all Christian preachers and thinkers that mention this topic condemn Jesus' definition of this sin, and also against the possibility of committing it. They would assure people that they have not committed this sin without even asking what these people have done. This does not come from compassion, for true compassion cannot break ranks with Jesus. They are zealous to do away with what Jesus said about it probably because they have done it or they want to do it. Why are you so eager to establish a right to speak against the Holy Spirit? Have you done it yourself? Do you want to do it again? Is this why you are like this? Hmm. The more you deny the definition or the possibility of this sin, the more problems you allow because there is no clarity. The way to fight Satan is with the truth, and not with more deception. The way to fight doubt is not by covering up the conscience, but by the knowledge of the truth and the assurance of the Spirit.

The assurance of the Spirit? This is another thing that Christian writers have lied about. They will tell you about church heroes who by all accounts were the best of the best, but nevertheless struggled with a lack of assurance all their lives. Ah...NO. If they lacked assurance all their lives, they were not even good believers, let alone the best Christian leaders. Seek for years? No. Seek it all your lives? No. If you are indeed a Christian, born again by the word of God and by the Spirit of God, then absolute assurance belongs to you. You should have received it the moment you believed. If you do not have it for some reason, you can get it today. Prolonged and complicated "seeking" is nonsense. We are not talking about what you can discover. We are talking about what you are, and you are already what you are. If someone is truly a Christian, then the lack of assurance is sometimes another spiritual attack that takes more than arguments to overcome, since it is not only about reason, but about force. So what we have been saying also applies here. Nevertheless, we must have sound doctrine on this issue.

Even Peter's triple denial of Christ was not unpardonable. What he did was not good, but it was not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. He did not speak about the Spirit, speak against the Spirit, or make disparaging implications about the Spirit. He spoke about Christ. He denied Christ. He even cursed while he denied Christ to add emphasis. But he did not speak against the Holy Spirit. He did not call the Spirit a demon. He did not say that the ministry of healing the sick and casting out demons was evil, or any such thing. If someone sins like Peter did and becomes disillusioned, the truth would set him free from condemnation and hopelessness. The truth would be that his sin can be forgiven. As the Scriptures say, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." As he repents and returns to Christ, he is restored. This is the solution for those who are being deceived by the devil to think that they have committed the unpardonable sin, when the truth is that they have not.



The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is what it is, and it is unpardonable. If you have done it, you will never be forgiven. If you have not committed this sin, then whatever you have done, you will be forgiven if you repent and confess that Jesus Christ died in your place. The whole thing is not complicated. You say, "But Jesus died for all sins." Well, don't tell me that. Tell him! See how far that gets you. He is the one who said, "The blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven" and "Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Tell him: "You died for all sins. So why don't you shut up, Lord!" Go. Go tell him that. Leave me out of it. If Jesus died for all sins in the sense you mean, then he also died for the sin of the final rejection of Christ, and there is no need to believe in him. You say, "He died for all sins, but each one must receive what he has done by faith." But if he died for all sins in the sense you mean, in a sense that can even overturn Jesus' own explicit exception to forgiveness, then he must have also died for the sin of refusing to receive what he has done by faith.

Of course, the Bible is clear that faith is necessary to receive the benefits that Jesus Christ achieved for his people. Anyone who does not receive Jesus by faith will burn in hell. The notion that he died for all sins does not overturn this, but it is understood in the context that salvation is received by faith. Likewise, the Bible is clear that the one who speaks against the Holy Spirit, such as calling the ministry of miracle healing demonic, evil, or some such thing, will never be forgiven. The notion that he died for all sins does not overturn this, but it is understood in the context that blasphemy against the Spirit will never be forgiven. In fact, another way of looking at this is that the one who speaks against the Holy Spirit has never been given faith in Christ and he will never be given faith in Christ. You can declare that Jesus died for all sins in any sense you wish to mean it, as long as the gospel saves only those who have faith, a person who speaks against the Holy Spirit is still locked out forever.

It follows that another attempt at false comfort is also futile, which is to declare that a Christian will never commit the sin of speaking against the Holy Spirit. This is marvelously stupid. This solves nothing. Suppose I say, "God can never die." This is true. But then I continue, "Therefore, John Smith can never die." This would be true only if John Smith himself is God. The first premise does not show that John Smith is God, and it does not show that John Smith will never die, because John Smith might have nothing to do with this first premise. But if John Smith dies, it shows that he has never been God in the first place. The first premise is true — God can never die. But we cannot establish that John Smith is God by this premise. The second premise is missing: "John Smith is God." In an argument, the first premise is never meant to establish the second premise, but they are both supposed to be known as true, so that the conclusion follows from them. If we can establish that John Smith himself is God by some other way, then we can use the first premise to deduce that John Smith will never die.

We can say that a believer will never fall away, because God will keep him by divine power, and a believer will never commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. However, this premise does nothing to show if a specific person is a believer. It provides assurance only if we can establish that a person is a believer by some other way. Only then can we deduce that this person has never committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy

Spirit, and that he never will commit this sin because God will keep him from it. Otherwise, if he has spoken against the Spirit, and if a Christian would never commit this sin, then obviously he has never been a Christian. All claims and appearances are then irrelevant. For him, the doctrine that a believer will never commit the unpardonable sin becomes a pronouncement of ultimate damnation instead of assurance.

All of this is simple and impossible to refute, but people will still resist and criticize me. Why? It is because I am correct about this, and as much as they want to attack Jesus openly, they do not want to expose themselves as false disciples. They dislike the idea of an unpardonable sin. They refuse to honor the Holy Spirit as much as God does. They resent God for extending this unique jealousy toward the Spirit. They resist because their own historic and modern heroes might have committed this sin, and have convinced many to do the same. It is because they themselves might have done it, repeatedly and gleefully, full of mocking words and condescending tones. Now someone tells them they will reap what they have sown, and they are afraid and angry. As Jesus said, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Even the sinful rich man said, "Father Abraham, at least send someone from the dead to warn my brothers, so that they will not come here to suffer with me." These "Christians" are worse than this rich man who went to hell. They strive to tell everyone, "Be comforted. What Jesus said does not apply. You have not committed this sin. In fact, it is probably impossible to commit." When the blind leads the blind, they will both fall into the ditch. They wish to lead others to hell with them. The result is that these liars will suffer even more than others in hell, where they will burn but they cannot die.

We talk about the unpardonable sin not because we wish to frighten people and rub it in their faces. We have a duty to talk about it, so that their blood will not be on our hands, so that God will not hold us accountable for their damnation. We wish to warn people about it, so that they will not commit this sin, and so that they will not endorse those who claim to be teachers but who diminish the seriousness of this sin. The accepted orthodoxy, characterized by a man-made theology of unbelief and defeat, actually increases the rate of depression, apostasy, blasphemy, and by extension also increases the rate of terminal tragedies such as suicide and damnation. This is because man-made orthodoxy does not believe in the promises of God for deliverance, and it does not accept the words of Jesus about sin. From the view of biblical orthodoxy, this traditional orthodoxy is in fact heretical and demonic. The good news is that it has no authority over us. If you flush it down the toilet, people cannot do much to you. As Jesus said, "Do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Even if I twist the words of Christ to destroy his teaching, he still said what he said, and even you would still know he said what he said. God will not send you to hell based on my words, but his words. So it does not help you at all to criticize what I said. If you wish to sin, but still save yourself, then refute God. That's all you need to do. Destroy him if you can, and you will be saved. But if you have not committed this sin, then you have not committed this sin. And now that we are clear about it, you are free in Christ Jesus.

## 5. A MATTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### 1500 Years of Apostasy

In one of my first sermons, in which I was teaching the people how to receive healing by faith in Jesus Christ, I told them, "Even if you do not need healing now, you still need to pay attention. Even if you think that medical science is more advanced than it has ever been, new diseases are coming. New diseases are coming that medical science will not be able to cure. And suppose medical science will discover the cure to a new disease, how do you know that it will find it in time to save you? Look! By the time it reaches everyone, if it ever reaches everyone, another new disease is born." This is not some prophetic statement, because I assume that even unbelievers realize this. Since then I have labored to advocate Christ's message of healing, which is to say, I have preached the gospel. The most fanatical opposition has come from those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ, but in reality they are those who have hijacked the community of Christ to establish their own religious customs and empires. It was also like this in the time of Christ. Those who claimed to follow Moses would speak against his ministry of healing, calling the Lord a false teacher, a deceiver, a blasphemer, and one possessed by demons. Jesus said that if they truly believed Moses, then they would have believed him, because Moses prophesied about him. If the people are true followers of Jesus, they would believe me, because I merely repeat what he said.

And Jesus said, "A tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak what is good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." In one place where he said this, he was answering those who attacked his ministry of healing. He said that those who blaspheme the Son could be forgiven, but those who blaspheme the Spirit could never be forgiven. What these people said against the ministry of healing revealed what kind of people they were. They were wicked people who likely blasphemed the Spirit, and would never be forgiven. They would burn in hell forever. They claimed to be followers of Moses, but they were nothing of the kind. They claimed to be children of Abraham, but as Jesus observed, Abraham would never have wanted to kill the Son of God. They were children of the devil. Now those who oppose the ministry of healing can claim all kinds of wonderful things about themselves, but their words betray them. Jesus would have never opposed what I teach, or what I do, when I am merely repeating what he said, and doing what he commanded. The apostles would have never opposed me, for they would not have dared to contradict Jesus. They can claim to be children of God. They can claim to be followers of Jesus. They can claim to be spiritual descendants of the apostles. But a tree is known by its fruit. How can they speak good things when they are evil? They speak evil on this same topic of Christ's ministry of healing. Now if Jesus said that the people at his time blasphemed the Spirit, and that the words revealed an abundance of evil in their hearts, who am I to propose a different diagnosis, when people in my time do the same thing? A tree is known by its fruit. They are the children of the ones who would speak like they do.

Christians should have been the ones leading the charge to save lives in the name of Jesus, and do it with a divine power that others cannot replicate unless they join us in the faith. After more than 1500 years of apostasy in this most basic of the gospel ministries, and after

reformations upon reformations, revivals upon revivals, when we have had multiple opportunities to examine our doctrines and practice over and over again, most Christians still have not awoken to righteousness. Now unbelievers are leading the charge to save lives. They do not give up even though their measly science fails again and again. They do not give up even though research proves to be expensive, and the process arduous. They keep marching forward even though some of their comrades perish in the way. And with all their fumbling efforts and blasphemous theories, they have saved countless "Christian" lives. As these so-called Christians boast about how "the will of God" has made them sick, and how all the promises of miracle healing in their infallible Scripture have lost all relevance, the wicked evolutionists shake their heads and save their lives anyway. This is not common grace, but common wrath. Both groups despise the precious promises of God, secured by the blood of Jesus for all those who would have faith in him. Neither camp can escape the outpouring of divine judgment.

People call themselves Christians but mock the doctrine of healing. Sarcasm and malice drip from their lips. The faithful ones have been carrying out this ministry, speaking, and writing, and praying overtime in an uphill battle to make up for the willful neglect of their so-called brothers. When miracles happen, these people pay no attention. But when they are itching for a debate, they whine, "If what you say is true, show us! Show us!" They have the same Bible. They should have been doing the same thing, and then together we could show the world! But they would not. They are like the heathens who struck Christ in the face and sneered, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" And they are like those who say, "Physician, heal yourself! Do here in London what we heard you did in Boston!" It is uncanny how much they are similar to those who mocked and murdered Jesus Christ.

Jesus was indeed a prophet, but he was not a clown show. He did not perform at the demand of unbelievers, but at the demand of believers, at the demand of faith. When his miracles happened in front of skeptics, they called him a deceiver, or perhaps a magician, and then they associated his work with demons and blasphemed the Holy Spirit, damning themselves forever. Likewise, we can indeed heal the sick and cast out demons, not because we are special in ourselves, but because Jesus said that anyone who has faith can do these things. Think about it, if our "Christian" critics can do these things, would they not happily join with us? You see, they cannot do these things. They know within themselves that they cannot do these things. They cannot do these things not because Jesus did not promise them, but because they have no faith. But it is easier for them to say that Jesus never promised them than to admit that they have no faith, or perhaps even that they have never believed in Jesus. If they are true followers of Christ, they would be helping us, not fighting us. They would applaud us for healing the sick and for teaching the doctrine. And they would do these things with us. The apprentice is not greater than the master, but it is enough for the apprentice to be like the master. We can indeed do in London what they heard that we did in Boston, but when they witness signs and wonders, they will respond in the same way that their spiritual forefathers did. They will call the followers of Christ deceivers and magicians. And they will blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

## **Public Health Hazards**

As for how the church should respond to the government's call to suspend assembly in order to reduce the spread of contagious disease during a pandemic, I will say upfront that all anti-healing and cessationist congregations are public health hazards, and they must cease assembly immediately, preferably permanently. The world has been in a spiritual pandemic and does not realize it. These heretical cults are spiritual viruses. They spread spiritual poison and call it their religion. It is their religious conviction to infect as many people as they can with unbelief and tradition, so as to erode humanity at the deepest level. The effect then manifests in all aspects of life, corrupting people's health, finances, relationships, and worst of all, their faith in God. Specifically, in the area of physical health, their doctrines turn good into evil and evil into good. They forbid people to have faith in God's promises of health and healing by faith. They extol the benefits of sickness and call it the will of God. This has done incalculable damage to the church and to humanity through the centuries. It has resulted in millions of premature deaths, unnecessary suffering, lost fortunes and opportunities, and thousands of other consequences. Truth matters. Their anti-healing and cessationist heresies have damaged the immune system of humans in general, rendering them more susceptible to diseases and viruses of all kinds, old or new, known or unknown. The only exceptions are those who have believed in the word of God, and know that by faith in Jesus Christ we have been removed from the authority of darkness and planted in the kingdom of the Son of God.

Anti-healing churches must cease assembly, not because any human government has ordered it, but because they have never followed God's charter for the church of Jesus Christ. The church ought to have pruned these heretical branches centuries ago. The anti-healing counterfeit churches are responsible for the spread of diseases and deaths. The whole world is reaping what they have sown. They ought to be shut down, especially at this time of pandemic. I pray that many people will finally wake up and change churches. The false gospel of sickness is killing themselves and their families. They have been offering themselves on the altar of sickness. They have been performing human sacrifices on their husbands, their wives, their parents, their children, and their friends. All this is supposed to be worship, when God is in a whole other building clear across town! The church ought to have dealt with this disgrace long ago, instead of allowing it to fester. When the churches did not do anything, individual followers of Christ ought to have revolted. We have been peaceful to the point of murder. We have been so polite toward the people of unbelief that millions have suffered and died, even though Jesus Christ took their infirmities and carried their sicknesses, and even some reprobates could have been healed by the name of Jesus, so that God may bear witness to himself. If human governments were to become involved, it ought to charge these churches with public endangerment, for their criminal doctrine of no-healing and no-miracle. Anti-healing heretics hide behind the doctrine of divine sovereignty, as if God would do far less than what he has promised. That would not be called sovereignty, but dishonesty. God is not a man that he should lie, but he will watch over his word to perform it. God is sovereign, and this is why he would perform even more healing miracles than he promised. He is not a liar, so he will never do less than what he said. But he is sovereign, so he is free to do more than what he said. And the Bible says that he will do more than what we can request or imagine. Whether by Christians or non-Christians, anti-healing churches must be stopped. They are literally,

physically killing people. And in fact, there is no telling how many souls they have destroyed and sent to the lake of fire by spreading doctrines that contradict the word of God. Anti-healing cults are more deadly than any pandemic. All Christians should celebrate and thank the heathens for shutting them down. But to destroy them permanently, Christians must participate. Christians must overturn all doctrines and institutes of unbelief, preach the truth about healing, and heal the sick in the name of Jesus.

It is laughable that political preachers complain about abortions all the time, but they are the ones who have been aborting adults and children alike, right from their pulpits as they spew forth their satanic venom of unbelief, tradition, cessationism, and anti-healing doctrines. Many people claim that they do not wish their babies to be born with sickness and abnormalities, and this is why they consider abortion. You say that is an excuse. True, but you judge them for murder by the standard of the word of God, and then you commit murder by denying the doctrine of healing in the same word of God. You appeal to the word of God to expose their excuse, but you withhold and even persecute the promise of God for healing that would remove this excuse for abortion. You are complicit in the killing of these babies. You are so self-righteous as you speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, but you attempt to silence the God who does speak for himself. The statistics that you cite to condemn abortion are the statistics that condemn you. All the things that you call the abortionists also apply to you, if you fail to preach and practice the healing that God teaches in his word. Of course, there are other excuses, such as poverty, or the inability to supply for the child. Thus we also charge the anti-prosperity cults for rejecting the many promises of God on this matter. God can supply what they need to raise their children, if they would only have faith in him. Anti-prosperity heretics wield the word of God to shove aside the poverty excuse from the abortionists, but in the next breath they also shove aside the same word of God that is the proper solution to the excuse. As Jesus said, "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." All the condemnations that anti-prosperity cults declare toward the abortionists also apply to themselves. However, our current focus is healing. Anti-healing heretics, you are perhaps even more guilty than the abortionists, because you claim to know the word of God as you declare the standard and condemn others, but you reject the same word of God that teaches healing. Many parents might have hesitated if they knew that there is even a chance that their babies could be born normal, healed by the power of God. But you -- YOU -- take that away from them. And now you complain that they wish to stop people like you from assembling? Man! I have wanted trash like you to disappear for so long. What a relief it is to rid the world of scum like you, if even only for several weeks!

Christians, demand an explanation from your leaders. "We have been coming to this God-forsaken wreck you call a church. You tell us that if we wish to hear from God, we should listen to the Bible, but then you teach against what the Bible says. You tell us to accept circumstances as the will of God, instead of what the Bible promises as the will of God. You portray suffering as so beneficial that it is as if our pains are redemptive. You burden us with your doctrines and customs that serve no purpose other than to honor your human heritage. We give you our service. We give you our money. We give you our children! Now our families and friends are dying. They are losing their jobs. Their hopes and plans are in ruins. And you want us to keep coming to hear more of this rubbish? Look at these

hundreds of verses in the Bible that promise us healing and prosperity in God. These...these would have saved us. These could have saved our children. These could have saved our businesses and even entire nations. But you persecuted those of us who dared to venture toward that direction of faith in God. You have doomed us. Why haven't we been told about these things? What have we been paying you for? Why, why have we been sitting there like idiots listening to you babble on week after week? To tell us that all these hundreds of verses do not mean what they say? Why have we been looking up to you in your stupid clown robes, sprinkling water everywhere and waving those tiny crackers around? Are you insane, or just stupid? We never verified your credentials. Did you get your theology degree from an asylum, or worse, did you get it from a seminary? Are you an agent sent from Satan, and you knew what you were doing all along?" Say this to your leaders. Demand the church to change, or to close forever. But wait, why am I speaking as if they bear all the blame? You are also condemned. You should have confronted your pastors and theologians decades ago. You are complicit in the sickness and destitution of your families and friends. We can go further than that. Indeed, you should have confronted your leaders with the Bible, but you have had the same Bible. Even if they refused to teach the truth, you should have learned and believed the truth. You are no less guilty than your leaders for the state of the world, for the souls that have perished, and for those who have suffered and died. If you have had access to the word of God, and if you have not stood for the doctrine of healing by faith in Jesus, then you are a murderer. You are a murderer just like your pastor.

### **Irrelevant and Non-Essential**

All of this is self-evident to those who believe the word of God, but most churches do not care much about that. As usual, Christians complain about the order to suspend assembly not from a biblical perspective, but from a political perspective. We can take time to address this, but it is not productive. Christians care so much about things from a political perspective because they are unspiritual, and because they are stupid. Indeed, it can be practical to exploit the law of man to make life easier on the church, but it only lasts as long as the state respects its own law. And of course the same Christians will either have nothing to say to their brothers and sisters in another country that has no protection from the law of man, or they will have to offer them another set of doctrines to consider. However, the teachings of Jesus Christ must apply to all peoples in all kinds of conditions. It is stupid to lean on the law of man for protection from the tyranny of man. It is the same men that decide what laws to make, how to interpret their laws, and whether to honor their laws. A peaceful protest against a tyrannical regime that is not wiped out by tanks in several hours is due to the regime's tolerance and self-interest, and not because there is genuine power in a peaceful protest. Once the patience runs out, the protest is suppressed. Then the bodies of the minions are scattered all over the place. The leaders flee the country and obtain scholarships from Harvard, as well as book deals and television interviews. The regime stays the same. International bodies make token objections, and then return to trade. Everything continues like it was before. The irony is that any positive effect of such a protest comes under the power of the target of this protest. If it works, the credit goes to the tyrant, not to the protest. What about threats to overturn the regime? What about appeals to international pressure? But then we are talking about various kinds of force. The methods

of men against men work only when the men in power have it in their hearts to allow it to work. No peaceful appeals can turn the heart of an irrational and insistent tyrant. The early disciples appealed to God for boldness to preach the gospel, and for God to perform signs and wonders and to heal the sick by the name of Jesus. The Christian method is not political pressure, but spiritual violence.

Now the issue is whether the government should have the power to order the church to suspend assembly. However, we must admit a distinction when this order comes during a pandemic. The government is not targeting churches, or even religious groups in general, but it wishes to suspend all public gatherings. It does not intend to criminalize the churches. And it does not intend to suspend public gatherings on a permanent basis. Does your government forbid even two Christians who live under the same roof to come together to worship God? No. But Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." There is your church. Does your government forbid Christians to communicate by electronic messages and video calls? No. You can do that as much as you wish. Thus this has nothing directly to do with religious freedom. Of course, if the government uses a temporary order to suspend public gatherings to prepare for a permanent and targeted persecution against religious groups, or Christian churches in particular, then it changes the issue. Even if that were to happen, Christians have themselves to blame because they have defied God's command and failed to establish a public reputation for healing the sick, a reputation that would have made it more difficult for any government to target Christians during a pandemic. However, at this time there is no indication that the government is interested in that at all. There are indeed places where there is genuine religious discrimination and persecution, but we are not referring to those places, and those places have prohibitions in place apart from any pandemic. Right now we are considering the major democracies that we live in. And in these places, the churches are so irrelevant that the government has not even considered targeting the churches in this time of national emergency. Christians have been so weak, so worldly, so void of faith and miracle power, and now they think everything is about them? The government is simply attempting to reduce the spread of disease. They are striving with mere human methods and inventions what the churches should have been doing by divine powers. Now the government urges people to stay home, and the churches are complaining? What right do you have to complain? What have you done for people's health lately -- or the last 1500 years? You have been hiding, avoiding, denying, and even condemning the divine promises and powers for miraculous healing splattered all over the word of God. Now you are complaining? Now you suddenly care about God? Oh, shut up and stay home.

Governments are shutting down "non-essential" businesses and gatherings, and Christians are indignant that they are included among the non-essential. What would you do if they let you gather? Aren't you just going to gossip about the pandemic anyway? Aren't you just going to talk about your sicknesses and worries as usual? Your pastor is going to tell you how everybody suffers, how it is all the will of God. He is going to tell you to think about it from this perspective, that perspective, and every other perspective except the biblical perspective of divine healing and immunity. Psalm 91 says, "For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease," and your pastor will say, "But God is sovereign." Sovereign to do what? To break a promise that he himself wrote, when no one



forced him to write it? This absurdity has been mainstream Christian doctrine for 1500 years. Why hear it again? Do you want to die? In fact, if you are so keen on defying the government, you should stay home even if they force you to go to church. Anti-healing cults are death traps, not houses of healing and prayer. What is so essential about telling people that sickness is the will of God? What is so essential about convincing people that, what Jesus called satanic bondage, is really a gift from God? Is it so essential to teach people this doctrine of demons? What is so urgent about trashing the ministry of Jesus and committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Can't we wait until things calm down before you burn in hell? You will have plenty of time to drag people down with you. Really, what is so essential about church gatherings, when Christians do not even believe their own God or their own Scripture? All this is useless. All this does more harm than good. If there is anything essential, it is essential that these houses of unbelief and disease should shut down. Government overstep? What overstep? Shouldn't a government be allowed to protect its people from the gospel of sickness preached by the churches, especially in the middle of pandemic? Knowing what I know, that would be the first thing I would do. Even as a Christian, or especially because I am a Christian, I would even specifically target the churches for precisely this reason, if I were to save the nation.

Tell me, if there is any government overstep, why is the government asking churches to suspend assembly? You say, "Wait, this makes no sense. It is the very meaning of government overstep." Let me explain. Throughout the New Testament records, Jesus and his followers were known by their ministry of healing miracles, and the master had guaranteed that these would continue and increase among those who have faith in him. If our churches truly consist of people who have faith in Jesus, then we would be known for our ministry of healing miracles. If the government were to overstep its authority in a time of pandemic and national emergency, ignoring any separation between church and state, then instead of ordering churches to suspend assembly, they would abduct Christians and compel them to minister to the sick. This is not happening. Why? Because it has never crossed their minds that Christians are relevant to healing the sick! The word of God portrays Christians as wielders of miracle healing power. They can heal the sick in the name of Jesus when no one else can. If they even sneeze "JESUS!" a cripple nearby gets up. This is the one thing that even unbelievers knew about Christians before they learned about our doctrines. But now...not so much. There are indeed churches that teach the word of God on healing, but they have been so diluted by false churches, the anti-healing cults, that Christians are no longer known for healing the sick. In fact, they are known for being sick, and for surrendering to being sick, because it is "the will of God." They talk about a "God," but instead of interpreting circumstances by some divine verbal revelation, they regard whatever circumstances they face as the will of this "God"; therefore, their "God" is Circumstances. That is what they worship. It is paganism. What overstep? No federal agents have kicked down my door. No government agency has sent me summons and threatened me to appear before them so that I can teach healing to the masses and pray for them, so that together with other Christians, I can save lives and rescue the economy and other aspects of the country. If I say that I am a Christian, they think I am just like others who call themselves Christians, and this would mean I am irrelevant in a pandemic. If the government has known that Christians are effective at healing the sick when no one else is, when things get dire enough, they could reach a point where they would make an

exemption for Christians until a medical solution is discovered. It is an emergency after all. Then the atheists would cry foul, but lives are saved. Now the government tells everyone to stay home, including the churches. The Christians cry foul, but lives are saved. Whose fault is it that things turn out this way? It is the Christians' fault. But never mind the government. Jesus is much more angry at the churches than the churches are angry at the government. The government poses no threat compared to the wrath of God. What did Jesus say about the servant who buried the talents, and then shoved it back in the master's face at his return? "Cast the worthless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Why isn't the government closing down hospitals? It is because hospitals are relevant in a pandemic. Churches ought to be even more relevant to healing the sick than the hospitals, but they are not, because they do not preach their own God and they do not practice what is in their own Bible. There is an overabundance of healing in the Christian God and the Christian Scripture, but Christians do not preach it, and even fight against it. Therefore, churches are irrelevant in a pandemic. The government is not saying that God is non-essential -- Christians have made sure that people do not even care enough about God to consider him in a national emergency. The government is not saying that God is non-essential, but God is not in the churches. If God is there, he would do what only he can do, such as performing miracles of healing. If God is not in the churches, shutting down churches cannot be considered an act of defiance against God. Let the churches start preaching the gospel and healing the sick. Let the churches take this message and this power to the streets. Then when the government opposes us, we can talk about religious persecution. Otherwise, there is not much of a religion, but just a book club. There is no persecution. Just shut up and stay home.

You cannot be ashamed of the word of God on healing -- the strongest power for physical healing in existence -- and then proclaim your relevance in a pandemic. It is too late to be indignant now. You did it to yourself. Not me -- I have been preaching and practicing healing, but "Christians" have been fighting me and trying to dilute my reach. There is no blood on my hands. We had our chance, but we were too busy fighting among ourselves about whether God even meant what he said. Wait, not me. You. I have been teaching this, reaching the teachable and rebuking the obstinate. But you -- you have been fighting this, making this a matter of debate instead of faith and obedience. Now people are dead because of you. Now the churches are shoved aside because of you. Even hair salons give people more joy than your anti-gospel about Jesus Christ, your message of sickness, poverty, and senseless suffering. People like you shut down my favorite donut shops -- all of them -- you sickos. If I cannot have my donuts, you cannot have your stupid churches. Shut up and stay home. Christians had God's solution to sickness and suppressed it for 1500 years. They hid it from humanity. It is too late to start acting like heroes. Let the atheist and evolutionist doctors save you -- again -- and maybe consider finally taking the gospel seriously when this is over. Anti-healing leaders, you have enslaved the people long enough. When this is over, let the people go. Let them go somewhere else, where they can believe the word of God and receive what it says. Unless God stirs up some faith in you, abandon the ministry and sit under some teachers that operate a genuine gospel work, that preach the word and heal the sick. Let it go. You have resisted the Spirit, and it has led to disaster. As for the

public, if we still do not revolt against unbelief, revolt against traditional institutions that do not teach healing by faith in Jesus or even teach against it, then the next time a pandemic happens, our churches will be shoved to the side again.

### **The Right to Disassemble**

Don't you come at me with a verse like Hebrews 10:25 and declare with all gusto that we are not supposed to suspend assembly. Elsewhere I have addressed that verse at length. It backfires against most churches that appeal to it. The verse is intended to demand faithfulness to Christ, and not intended to be exploited by church leaders to manipulate their people into tolerating heresy and abuse. Or can the Church of Satan use this verse too? In context, it says that we should not suspend assembly due to fear of persecution from the authorities. How is that relevant, when the government is not targeting the churches, and when the churches have forsaken the word of God long ago? What good does it do to not forsake assembly, when you refuse to do what is right during assembly? The Bible says that in a church gathering, one would teach, one would have a revelation, one would speak in tongues, and another would prophesy. Does that happen in your church? If not, why assemble? Churches must not suspend assembly due to fear of persecution, but the churches have feared to teach what the word of God says about ministering healing miracles. What difference does it make, if such churches do not gather? Churches must not suspend assembly due to fear of persecution, but the churches have persecuted those who practice what the word of God says about receiving healing miracles. What difference does it make, if such churches forsake assembly? It is all a pretense. The verse is saying that we must not forsake assembly in order to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. However, if the churches themselves have long ago rejected the teaching of Jesus Christ, then to remain faithful to Jesus Christ would mean to forsake assembly in these churches. Christians must not continue assembly due to fear of persecution from the churches! Have the courage to forsake assembly even if these churches condemn you. Christians, if the churches do not teach about the healing promises of God and practice the ministry of miracle healing in the name of Jesus, then even if they threaten you with persecution, do not assemble. In fact, you have the right to threaten the churches with the word of God. The churches are now in the same position as those who persecuted the early disciples. For them to use a verse like Hebrews 10:25 to threaten you would be as absurd as if the Jews that persecuted the believers had used the verse to force Christians to attend their synagogues. The verse is not mainly for assembly, but against compromise. The verse is about faithfulness to Jesus, not faithfulness to the church. There is flexibility when it comes to assembly if there is no compromise due to fear. On the other hand, if a church is unfaithful to Jesus, refusing his commands and promises, then to continue assembly would be to compromise. When are you going to take Jesus Christ seriously? When the pandemic is over, do not assemble at your old church that preaches unbelief and sickness. Do not go to a church just because it says "Christian" on the door. Listen to what it says. Watch what it does. If it does not follow Jesus Christ on this matter of healing in full force, forsake assembly immediately. Some talk about healing, but they merely pay lip service to it. There are no obvious and frequent healing miracles there. Do not attend. Assemble all you want, but at some place where they believe the gospel. As that preacher says, "Don't waste your life," and in the next breath says, "Don't waste your cancer." Right...don't waste your life at his place.

For the sake of completeness, we should mention the conspiracy theories. They make no difference to my response. This is because I am not mainly concerned about whether the pandemic is real or not, or whether the statistics reported are accurate or not, or how or where the virus originated. These are the least of my concerns. The conspiracy theories represent a separate issue than what we are talking about. We are supposing the situation exists as represented to us, and we can have a meaningful discussion about it. Moreover, my main concerns do not need to be associated with current events, but they relate to the principles of biblical healing, to how churches have defied the commands of Christ, and to how churches ought to behave before the world and toward government orders, especially when the churches have apostatized from Christ the Healer for an extended period, even one that has lasted for centuries. All of these items are solid topics of discussion regardless of any immediate context in the world, real or imagined. As for conspiracy theories related to our governments, again, at this time there is no indication that religious groups are targeted. And even if there is religious discrimination, my main concerns relate to healing and the church. An apostate church is a greater evil than any tyrannical or scheming government. And we do have an apostate church, one that has defied Christ throughout the centuries on this matter of healing the sick by faith in his name.

What about churches that have been faithful to teach and to practice the Bible's doctrine of healing? What about Christians that have demonstrated supernatural healing and immunity verifiable by medical experts? Is there any reason for the government to order them to suspend assembly? Indeed a major issue has been removed, but the matter is not so simple. It remains that the order does not target the churches, and it is temporary. And how does a government distinguish between churches that believe in healing and those that do not? A much needed upheaval among the churches over this issue has not occurred. If the churches that believe healing themselves have not renounced and separated from those that do not, is it up to the government to decide? Wouldn't that be further overstep? In any case, rather than engaging this matter from the political perspective, I wish to maintain the focus on the doctrine of healing in my answer to this. Churches should cooperate and temporarily suspend assembly, but for different reasons. In this context I will divide the churches into four broad categories. I would prefer to make more precise distinctions, but that would render the discussion too tedious.

The first group of churches -- and Christians -- belong to the no-healing and anti-healing category. They do not believe what the Bible says about healing. Or they do not emphasize it. Or they are against it. The whole range of attitudes that fall short of an active and outspoken policy regarding the Bible's teaching on miracle healing would come under this category. This includes those who claim that they believe in healing, but relegate the whole matter to the sovereignty of God. They are liars, because God in his sovereignty has made definite commands and promises regarding healing. If they respect the sovereignty of God, they would respect these commands and promises. They worship circumstances, not the God of the Bible. These are unfaithful churches, even counterfeit churches. We have already discussed them. They are public health hazards. They are a danger to humanity. They should be shut down even during normal times, if not by the government, then

certainly by Christians. Whatever the government does to them, I have no sympathy. So we move on to consider those churches that believe in biblical healing.

The second group of churches affirm biblical healing, but there is no real faith. They go through the motions of laying hands on the sick, but healing miracles do not happen. There is no actual demonstration of the doctrine. When they gather, some of their members would jump up and down, scream and shout, and in general act like insane people. But there is no power. These churches are marginally better than no-healing churches. They are in fact better, because they at least put the matter before the people in a supportive fashion, so that there is a better chance for someone within these congregations to be awakened to the truth, and to develop genuine faith in biblical healing. However, since there is no actual healing power among them, there is also no supernatural immunity from contagious diseases. Therefore, they should temporarily suspend assembly just like the no-healing churches.

The third group of churches affirm biblical healing, but they lean too much on the gifts of the Spirit instead of faith in the promises of God. Since I have explained the distinction between miracles that occur by the gifts of the Spirit versus by other means, I will not explain it again here. Suffice it to say that the gifts of the Spirit represent only one of several modes by which God performs miracles. There are indeed demonstrations of healing miracles when these churches gather. The miracles are often few relative to the number of sick people in attendance, but sometimes there are hundreds of miracles in a single meeting. However, this just illustrates my point -- an over-dependence on the gifts of the Spirit, so that with a general faith we depend on the sovereignty of God to perform more than what the people specifically believe -- render the occurrences of miracles sporadic and unpredictable. This kind of performance cannot seize enough attention from the medical community, and it is insufficient to challenge the dominance of the scientific mindset. Moreover, of immediate relevance is the fact that a sporadic and unpredictable distribution of healing miracles leaves much of the congregation vulnerable to contagious diseases. That said, these churches can still be extremely helpful where there are widespread non-contagious diseases. If we can gather in these churches those with cancer, arthritis, heart disease, various injuries, blindness, and so on, many of these people would be healed. The problem is that, since they depend on the gifts of the Spirit, we cannot say which ones would be healed. And since they do not emphasize faith in the word of God, there is no increased immunity from contagious diseases. Therefore, although they are in a much better position, they should also temporarily suspend assembly just like the no-healing churches.

The fourth group of churches -- and Christians -- are the only kind that properly represent the biblical doctrine of healing. They believe in the Jesus of the Bible, the one who said, "According to your faith, be it unto you." What you believe will happen, is what will happen. What you believe God will do for you, is what God will do for you. They believe in what God said about his own nature, as one who forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases. They believe that the lifestyle and attitude of the Son of God revealed the will of God as one who is eager to heal the sick. They believe in what Jesus did to secure healing for our bodies. They believe in what Jesus commanded about the ministry of healing for all his followers. They believe in what the Bible promises about physical healing for all

those who have faith. Then they teach the Bible -- intelligently, repeatedly, and diligently -- so that those who listen to them would have this faith to receive from God. And because of this, they are consistent and effective. Their people know how to receive and minister healing from God in a sober and deliberate manner. The miracles are not random or sporadic. They are predictable, received and ministered on purpose. With a high degree of accuracy, they can discern which ones would receive, as when Paul perceived that a crippled man had faith to be healed, and cried, "Stand up on your feet!" They also welcome the gifts of the Spirit, and because they have love and compassion toward people, they zealously desire more power. But the gifts only add to the effects that they already produce by faith in the word of God. This is the only group of churches that, in principle, should not need to suspend assembly. However, because they have never established a sufficient reputation before the world, and because their influence has been so diluted by the previous groups, it is with regret that I say they should also suspend assembly. The good news is that because they solely depend on faith in the word of God, with the gifts of the Spirit added only as a bonus, and because the word of God is easily transmitted especially in this age of advanced technology, this group of churches and believers is also the least hindered or negatively affected by complying with the government's order to suspend assembly. They can still teach people the word of God about healing. And people who read and listen to their words can still receive healing by their own faith, directly from God. All of them will come out on the other side stronger, better, healthier, and more spiritual than ever before.

Let me say more about this. The New Testament teaches that we should be concerned about public opinion, not in the sense that we should cater to the false beliefs and wicked desires of the non-Christians, but that we should present the Christian faith in the best light possible, maintaining the impression that our God is one that teaches us to live in faith, in peace, in compassion, and in integrity. This teaching is perhaps unfamiliar to a great number of Christians, so here is a partial list of relevant verses: 2 Samuel 12:14, Nehemiah 5:9, Romans 2:24, 1 Corinthians 10:32-33, 2 Corinthians 6:3, 1 Timothy 5:14, 1 Timothy 6:1, Titus 2:5, 1 Peter 2:12, 1 Peter 3:16. There are many more. Jesus himself did some things "lest we should offend them." He never hesitated to offend the religious leaders. In fact, he contradicted their creeds and violated their customs on purpose. However, he avoided unnecessary offense toward those who could not have understood. It was the same with Paul. Several times he said that we ought to behave this way or that way so that "the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." Of course, some unbelievers would blaspheme God no matter what, but Christians should not add fuel to the fire. And indeed, in some aspects it is possible to achieve a positive reputation. For example, if Christians never cheat in business, unbelievers might still consider them fools for believing in God, but they will say, "At least they always honor their word." If Christians never cover up sexual abuse that occur in their midst, but speedily and publicly punish the offenders, and make a point of hunting down the criminals to bring them before the authorities, the unbelievers would say, "Well, if they say this never happened, of course it never happened." But Christians do cheat in business, constantly. And Christians do cover up sexual abuse, so much so that we do not even know how much has been covered up. And now we are so indignant about religious freedom! We have not followed the example of Jesus and the apostles. We have not cared about integrity and public opinion about the

Christian faith. To the world, the Christian faith represents hypocrisy, not integrity. Be ashamed, not indignant. Be embarrassed, not self-righteous. If we have cared about how outsiders perceive the faith that the Lord entrusted to us, we would have behaved differently through the centuries. Then the unbelievers would say, "I still do not believe what they say, but I will have to admit, they are a peaceful and productive people. They are an asset to society." If this is the best that we can achieve among those who refuse to believe, we should still attempt it. It is right to offend the unbelievers as much as possible, as often as possible, if it is for the truth, but Christians often offend because of pride and self-righteousness, or they stand up for what they wish is right in their minds after they have contradicted what they knew to be right in the word of God. And Jesus has to pay for our mistakes with his reputation.

Since the churches have worked hard through the centuries to establish themselves as the most useless institutions in a time of widespread disease, when they randomly grow a spine and stand up for a principle that no outsider cares about, one that is not even necessarily biblical, this is not going to give them a positive impression about the faith of Jesus Christ. When outsiders think about Christians, healing almost never comes to mind. On the rare occasions when they see some Christians that pray for the sick, immediately they see even more Christians attack them. So at a time when healing is the most relevant thing to the entire world, Christians become nothing other than a public nuisance, nay, a public hazard, when they defy medical opinion and insist on a practice that to the outsiders is the very thing that threatens healing the most. Christians have ceded the entire domain of healing the sick to the heathens, abiding by the Hippocratic Oath instead of the Great Commission. This is the worst time to grow a spine for a principle that is unrelated to healing the sick. It is an invitation for maximum contempt. Christians have offered no extended and intelligent explanation on healing the sick to the non-Christians, followed by demonstrations and evidences that would withstand scrutiny by medical experts -- and indeed, although we believe that human science is severely flawed, healing miracles performed by the power of Christ can satisfy their standards. Thus if we suddenly defy medical advice, the unbelievers would not consider us principled, but backward and selfish. They would think that not only the Christians would be the ones that perish, but they would contribute to the spread of this contagious disease to all others. Concerning most Christians, who have no faith that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death, this assessment by the heathens would be correct.

Do not be angry with your governments. They are trying to save lives, including yours. They are trying to save you from the fallout of your stupid religious tradition and unbelief. Be angry with your churches. Be angry with your pastors and theologians. Be angry with your orthodox heroes, both historic and modern. Be angry with all those who opposed healing by faith in Jesus Christ. Be angry even with those who merely neglected to teach it. All of them have sinned against God, and against all of humanity. Will you finally exorcise these people from your life? You will not, right? So you should be most angry with yourself. Be angry with yourself. You have the same Bible. You have the same message from God as all these other people. If they did not believe God, you could have believed God. But you have not done your part to believe what he said and to teach others. The more angry you are with your governments, and the more you defy them at this time,

the more you condemn yourself. You reap what you sow. You have been sowing messages and attitudes of sickness, and now this is what you reap. Your theology is so masochistic that you are even proud to be sick. Jesus called it satanic bondage, but you think it is some badge of holiness or some gift from God. And you have attacked those who believe in biblical healing. Now when people get sick, Jesus is the last thing they think of -- because of people like you. So when they attempt to stem the spread of disease by enforcing isolation, and Christians insist on gathering, the churches do not appear as solutions to anything, but only as problems in the eyes of unbelievers. You are guilty. You have allowed this situation to develop. The only innocent ones are those who have promoted biblical healing as hard as they could, but have been drowned out by the voices of unbelief. If you have been faithful to the teachings of Scripture on healing, and if you are indignant that the government does not offer you an exemption or consider you essential, then from now on work hard to distinguish yourself from others who claim to be Christians, but who are in fact no-healing and anti-healing heretics.

Of course we are considered non-essential. Christians are not essential even in the psychological sense, because even heathen therapists offer more comfort than false teachers who keep talking about the will of God and the gift of sickness. It is a thorough disgrace. This is what the cessationist cults have gotten us. What good is it, if churches gather only for the sake of gathering? There is only harm, and no benefit. The churches are not even teaching what the word of God says about the issue. It is far better for people to stay home and read the Bible for themselves. Perhaps some of them will discover the truth when not distracted by their unregenerate pastors. If we had presented biblical healing in a sober and intelligent manner all this time, and if we have provided medically verifiable cases to the experts, and if we had demonstrated immunity to even new diseases and viruses -- you may not believe the gospel includes any of these things, but let us suppose these things are true -- then it would not matter if the churches (the churches that have faith) insist on gathering during a pandemic. In fact, even the unbelievers would support this and come to our meetings. We would be the only group allowed to remain open to do whatever we wish, if the world has known what the name of Jesus could do. But the world does not know. Christians have made sure of that. It is too late to expect special treatment in this present crisis, but we know what we ought to do moving forward. Christians must invest heavily into biblical healing, with their hearts, their time, their money -- everything. Christians must develop faith to consistently experience healing miracles in a widespread, global scale. There must be a pandemic of healing. They need to be louder and bolder in teaching it and in practicing it. They must become less polite with their critics. They must establish a zero tolerance policy for all no-healing or anti-healing cults and figures. For those who have believed in healing by faith, even when they have done well for themselves, they have not been entirely faultless. They have not been fierce and ruthless enough. They have mingled too much with no-healing and anti-healing heretics. They have not done enough to separate themselves, to demonstrate a distinction before those who could not tell the difference. All of this must be done without sacrificing an intelligent and deliberate approach to the doctrine and practice. Is this possible? Christians are sinful, stubborn, and most of them are not even true Christians. So think this will happen naturally. Nevertheless, what is impossible with man, is possible with God. And I will certainly do my part.



## **A Most Spiritual Ministry**

Members of the Reformed tradition are especially hypocritical. They declare that God is for all of life. They declare that there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. Some of them declare that the body is as important as the spirit. More than a few of their most respected theologians even declare the unity of the body and spirit such that there should not be a distinction. I have criticized them on all these points, because either they do not mean what they say, or they are outright wrong, and some points are heretical and blasphemous. Of course God is for all of life, but the Reformed do not believe this. They make God into a heuristic principle to talk about all of life, and that is as far as they go. And I have argued that there is a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular, and the spirit and the body. I affirm that there is a priority between them, so that the spirit is more important than the body, but God cares about both and provides for both. In any case, when I teach about biblical healing, the Reformed are the ones who complain that I focus too much on the body. What? Do they hear themselves? Besides being a hypocritical response that contradicts their own claims, it is a direct assault on the most obvious thing about the ministry of Jesus, the thing that he used to introduce himself, the thing so obvious that even foreigners heard about it before the rest of the gospel: "You know what happened throughout Judea...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." This is the thing I am too focused on? If this is what the Reformed is about, then we should consider an official renunciation of the tradition and leave it behind forever. We must declare it apostate. We have no need of such trash. But if this is not what the Reformed is about, then let those who still cling to this human tradition prove themselves and "produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

Healing is important to all of life. Jesus understood this. Healing is especially spiritual. His healing miracles led many to faith and repentance, to worship and praise toward God. Even unbelievers know that healing affects all of life, all aspects of a nation, an economy, even all aspects of humanity and history. Christians know that it is also important to the "spiritual" life. If the Reformed are still too stupid to know this after a pandemic, then there is perhaps no saving them from the judgment of God. Sickness cripples not only bodies, but also livelihoods, the education of children, and even church gatherings. It can break a nation. It can wreck the world. It can devastate the church. Don't the Reformed know that all aspects of life and thought are related to one another like this? Some of them even pretend to teach this like they are experts, don't they? Faith is for all of life. It does not just talk about all of life, as the Reformed do. Faith produces actual results, even miracles and other tangible effects, in all of life. This is because God himself answers faith in all areas of life. The Reformed teach that God is for all of life, but they do not believe it, and this makes them the most hypocritical and weakest of all Christians. Excuse me, I mean all those who claim to be Christians. Insulted? Angry? I don't care, because the government is protecting me from you and I am staying home, you Gnostic morons. Speaking of the Gnostics...I mean the Reformed, wait, I mean the Gnostics. Which is which? Let me start over. The Reformed are fond of calling everybody Greek this or Gnostic that. If somebody says that this spiritual thing is more important than that physical thing..."GREEEEK!" If somebody says that there is a sharp distinction between the spirit and the

body..."GNOSTIC!!!!!" If somebody points out that "for everything God created is good" does not give you a license to indulge in sports and beer..."GREEEK!" If somebody says that God still speaks in visions and dreams..."GNOSTIC!!!!!" Then you have someone tell me, "The difference between me, the Reformed, and someone like you is that I favor the healing of souls, while you emphasize the healing of the body." Does this make sense to anyone who has been exposed to my preaching and writing? I emphasize almost everything. Sure, in the calling of God, some might pay more attention to certain issues and tasks, and I try to be "Greek" and "Gnostic" like Jesus in following what he emphasized, but as someone who has considered himself mainly a healing evangelist since the first day of ministry -- yes, the kind that theologians always criticize, and can never imitate -- I have emphasized plenty of other things. The truth is that the Reformed are the most Greek and Gnostic of the whole lot, or even worse than Greek and Gnostic, and they exclude God from almost all areas of life, allowing him only as a principle of discussion or interpretation, never as an active and obvious power or person.

Healing of the body is one of the most spiritual ministries. Jesus loved it like nothing else, and he said that he was only following the Father's lead. He performed this ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit, and on this topic he warned that anyone who speaks against the Spirit will never be forgiven. Never! Thus anyone who downplays this aspect of the Christian faith insults all three members of the Trinity at the same time. Healing of the body by the power of God is such a spiritual work, and it often prepares for the healing of the spirit. One man had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Jesus healed him, and said to him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." This shows that not only does the healing of the body prepare for the healing of the spirit, but the sickness in the spirit, or sin, could lead to a sickness in the body. All of life is related, and Jesus is for all of life. One man had been blind from birth. Jesus said that the work of God would be displayed in his life. Doesn't that sound spiritual? He healed the man of the blindness. This led to a most exhilarating episode that exposed the confusion and hypocrisy of the religious traditionalists. And then Jesus said to the man, "Do you believe in the Son of Man? You have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking to you." The man answered, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped Jesus. This sounds a little spiritual, does it not? Physical healing did that. In another place, Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven. And to show that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins, take your mat and go home!" Don't you dare pit one against the other. There is no telling how many have weakened in spirit, and even spurned the gospel and were thrown in hell, because Christians never told them about a Jesus who would heal the sick. If you are so spiritual, you would believe the word of God about physical healing. If you do not believe the word of God about physical healing, it must mean that you are not spiritual. The more you believe in God for physical healing, the more spiritual you will become, because it would mean that you are looking at God more than you are looking at your circumstances, and that you are paying more attention to his promises than physical feelings and human opinions. How is that not spiritual? As the Bible says, Abraham believed against all hope that he would become the father of nations, because God promised him. He faced the fact that his body was old and his wife was barren, yet still did not waver, but believed that God was able to do what he had promised. This, the Bible says, is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." Abraham was justified by faith in a promise of physical healing.

As for how we should minister to those infected by this sickness, we should not make it a special case. Of course, it might be more contagious than many others, and medical science has not developed a reliable or widespread response to it. To us, one sickness is just as impossible to heal as another, because we have no power in ourselves to heal anybody. Whatever the condition, we have been able to heal the sick only by faith in God. And to God, it is really just another stupid virus. Thus there is no difference either to us or to God. To design special instructions for prayer at this time would be to say that we have not been teaching the correct methods all along or that we have reserved some other measures until needed. Goliath was perhaps stronger than the lion and the bear, but David came against him the same way, with the tools of a shepherd and in the name of the Lord. The most reliable method to minister to the sick has always been to teach them the word of God on the subject, so that they can receive directly from God, with or without our prayers for them. We can review the promises of God concerning healing, and also review the methods we have used and that are illustrated in the word of God. However, I would like to add that in the case of contagious diseases, Christians ought to walk in faith and not presumption. It is not necessary to lay hands on the sick when we pray for their healing. For example, in the case of lepers, Jesus at times touched them with his hands, but at times he only declared their healing and sent them on their way. Healing can occur either way. Now we can say that he deliberately touched some of them to lift the stigma of uncleanness from lepers. This does not always apply, and he did not touch all of them. And those with the virus today are not considered spiritually unclean, so that there is no reason to touch them on purpose in order to counter religious tradition. Even if we possess immunity by faith, it might be proper to demonstrate excellent hygiene when we pray for the sick to avoid offense. On a related note, faith is not an excuse for nasty habits. Christians ought to be more clean than everybody else. Other than that, we have no new instructions. The name of Jesus will work against all diseases, new or old, contagious or not, strong or weak.

Few issues warrant a civil war among Christians more than biblical healing. A full-scale attack against anti-healing cults is long overdue. They have allowed the current condition to occur, and they will continue to exploit the people's suffering and add to their burdens in order to maintain their religious positions. Their no-healing and anti-healing heresies, anti-faith, anti-promise, and faux-sovereignty heresies, as well as their cessationist heresies all reveal who they are in their hearts. As Jesus said, "How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." We must expose the anti-healing heretics in the public view, and exterminate them with the prayer of faith and the word of God. However, the most reliable approach to combat heresies is to preach the truth. Thus it is even more important for us to have faith in the word of God about healing, and then teach others about it. Do not engage in endless debates with those who claim to be followers of Jesus, but who will never agree to what he said. Reach out to those who might listen to the gospel of healing -- the only gospel in the word of God. There are still millions of people who do not know that it is possible for God to heal the sick. It has never crossed their minds that God would do something visible and tangible for them, and he would perform a miracle for them, that he would answer their prayers in an immediate and obvious fashion. Tell them. And we must not stop there. We must build our lives upon God's promises on healing, and receive and minister this healing in our actual experience. God's

promises are not just pretty words on a page, but they are meant to produce powerful effects. Jesus said, "According to your faith, it will be done to you." What you believe will happen to you, is what will happen to you. If you believe against healing, you will not get any of it. If the anti-healing heretics become sick and repent, we must still pray for them to receive healing. And their sins will also be forgiven. This is the compassion of Jesus. However, if they harden their hearts against the truth, then they will receive in their bodies the full effects of their theology of sickness, poverty, and suffering. God will see to it that they will reap the full devastation of their false doctrines in their bodies, in their finances, in the relationships, and in their families and children. As the Scripture says, "As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very things I heard you say."

## 6. THE PRIMACY OF HEALING MINISTRY

Jesus devoted an exaggerated amount of effort to healing the sick. If he had wanted to prove his identity and divine nature, he could have performed far more spectacular miracles that displayed his power. He could have called down fire and divided the sea multiple times daily, but he did not. He could have commanded angels to appear and entertain dinner guests at every party, but he did not. He could have teleported his entire entourage to every ministry location, but he did not. If he had the time, he could have preached more. If he had the energy, he could have written books. Instead, he healed the sick, healed the sick, healed the sick, and healed the sick. After that, he healed the sick some more. In fact, if Jesus had wanted to appear ultra-spiritual, he could have spent much more time saying, "Your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven." But he healed the sick, and said, "Your faith has made you well."

When he was betrayed, one of his disciples struck a man with a sword. As if by instinct, Jesus immediately reached out again to heal the sick, and restored someone who was there to arrest him. He could not stop himself from healing the sick. He appeared driven by a power and compulsion to heal. Yet he said that he only went along with what he perceived the Father was doing. Thus the Father himself was driven to heal the sick. As Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." What is the Father like? The Father must be like someone who is obsessed with healing the body. What is God's will? God's will must be to heal the sick, heal the sick, heal the sick.

When John the Baptist asked if he was the one they were waiting for, Jesus mentioned five times in different ways that he was healing the sick, and then mentioned one time that he was preaching the gospel. He did not say that he was preaching to this group, preaching to that group, restoring this creed, establishing that denomination. He did not say that he was teaching politics here, and encouraging nationalism there. "Christians" that follow traditionalism have offered all these answers to claim that they are the faithful ones, but they are the same ones who oppose the ministry of healing, and the ministry of miracles. When this is the case, of course, even when they refer to preaching, they are not preaching the gospel. No true ministry of the gospel would oppose the ministry of healing.

When we look at Jesus, we see that the perspective of the gospel is fundamentally different from the perspective of human orthodoxy. The two are different at such a basic level that if one can be called the gospel, the other one cannot be called the gospel. If one can be called the friend of God, the other must be called the enemy of God. We must take warning from this, because the church had so soon slipped from one to the other, turning from believing God's doctrines into inventing their own doctrines, and never knew it happened. Worse, it is more likely that people at least unconsciously knew it, and liked it. We must focus on the true gospel, and also deliberately destroy man-made tradition and orthodoxy, so that after some time we will not become enslaved to "-isms" named after mere men, and still think we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Although the healing miracles of Jesus were physical, and although the people who received healing eventually died at the end of their lives, he never considered this ministry

unimportant or unspiritual. Of course he did a lot of praying, but he could have done more praying. Instead, he healed the sick. Of course he did a lot of teaching, but he could have done more teaching. Instead, he healed the sick. Of course he trained disciples, but he could have done more training. Instead, he healed the sick. It was not the only thing he did, but he did a lot of it. He healed every day of the week, often many hours in a day, but he emphasized that the Sabbath ought to be a day of healing -- not only spiritual healing, but physical healing, and not by human method, but by divine power, by miracles. Healing is a holy work. Healing is spiritual. Healing is worth the time. Anyone who dares complain about an overemphasis on physical healing exposes himself as someone who is estranged from Christ. This person does not know the most obvious thing about the Master, the thing that even his enemies knew. But he complains about the same thing that caused these enemies to murder the Lord. If this scoundrel claims to be a disciple, it makes him even more hypocritical than those who nailed Jesus to the cross.

The ministry of healing was so highly esteemed by Christ himself that he made it stand together with the ministry of preaching and the ministry of worship, especially on the day of Sabbath. He made a point of throwing this in the face of the orthodox religious leaders. He confronted them about this in public, and shamed them for their lack of faith and hardness of heart. He intentionally transgressed their creeds. He defended his disciples when they broke their traditions. One of the several times where Scripture depicted Jesus as especially angry involved the ministry of healing, when he defended it against the religion of man. Today's Christian church has the same hostile attitude toward the ministry of healing. It is the same with today's Christian leaders, pastors, and scholars. Are we very "Christ-like" when we discuss this? If we are like Christ, we would become angry. We would expose the religious leaders by name, and we would blast the church members in public. We would insult them, mock them, call down woes upon them, and tell demeaning parables about them, just like Jesus did. This is Christ-like. But how often are we nice and calm? How often do we debate theology like detached observers, when the masses are suffering and dying all around us, with painful and degrading diseases and injuries, even though they could be healed in an instant by the name of Jesus? This, I say, is not Christ-like. It is satanic, and worthy of damnation.

To the same extent as the deity of Christ and justification by faith, there never should have been any debate about the ministry of healing. This is such an obvious and established teaching of the gospel that many in the time of Christ knew that he healed the sick way before they knew he was the Son of God. People who oppose the ministry of healing, do they truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God? He continued to heal after his resurrection, as Peter told someone, "Jesus Christ heals you." All this time we are in fact talking about Jesus' ministry of healing. And all this time, it is Jesus that our opponents have been fighting and mocking.

Jesus designed the same kind of ministry for his early disciples. Since the beginning, their work was about preaching the gospel, and healing the sick, healing the sick, healing the sick, healing the sick. When they were threatened by political power, they did not strive for political victory, but they offered a spiritual response. They prayed that God would infuse them with the courage to continue preaching the gospel, and that God would stretch

out his hand to heal the sick, so that signs and wonders would be performed by the name of Jesus. Now by saying all of this, we do not mean that the ministry of preaching is less important. Preaching is most important. However, the ministry of healing has been so neglected and opposed by the self-anointed representatives of the Christian faith that these people's work never amounted to gospel ministry.

Preaching is important, but we must not be preaching just to be preaching. We must preach the gospel, but a message that is without healing or that opposes healing is not the gospel, just like a message that is without the forgiveness of sins or that opposes justification by faith is not the gospel. The Bible does not know a gospel that has no healing. We must preach the gospel, but a message that is without the Spirit of miracle power for all those who believe is not the gospel, just like a message that is without the atonement is not the gospel. We must preach the gospel, but a message that is without the physical and financial effects that the gospel guarantees to us is not the gospel, just like a message that is without the spiritual and psychological effects that the gospel guarantees to us is not the gospel. Is it a strict standard to insist that the gospel must be the gospel? Let us be strict then. And by this standard, almost no orthodox traditionalist and almost no follower of any -ian or -ism preaches the gospel. Sure, the gospel is so full and strong that perhaps even half a gospel can save. But this does not mean that those who butcher Jesus Christ can claim to be his disciples or to wield a true gospel ministry. The criminal on the cross did not have much knowledge, and he said only, "Lord, do not forget me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Even mere crumbs falling from the Master's table can save and heal, but woe to those who dismantle the gospel on purpose, and persecute those who declare it in all its fullness and power!

Jesus wanted not only his early disciples to continue his ministry of healing, but he also commanded all his followers to do the same. He said that those who believe in him would perform the same miracles that he performed, and that they would perform even greater miracles. Jesus would be the true power who causes these miracles, but he said that his disciples would perform them in his name. He said that these signs would follow those who believe in him -- they will cast out demons; they will speak in tongues; they will be immune to snakes and poisons; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Whether in the Gospels, or the Acts of the Apostles, or the Letters, the apostles taught the basis and the promise for the ministry of healing. Isaiah's prophecy was true when he said, "Himself took our infirmities, and carried our sicknesses." And Peter said, "By his stripes, we are healed." The suffering of Jesus applies to both the forgiveness of sins and the healing of diseases without distinction. Within Scripture itself, the same verses are applied to both interchangeably. Therefore, anyone who denies one also forfeits the other. James wrote, "The prayer of faith will heal the sick. The Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." There is one inseparable message and ministry. True Christians will devote themselves to the message and ministry of healing no less than Jesus himself did.

Evil men have tried to portray an emphasis on physical healing as stemming from a selfish desire for comfort, or some unspiritual motive. God never thought so. He revealed his nature as one who "forgives all our iniquities, and heals all our diseases." Is God now an

accomplice to sin? The traditional orthodoxy of unbelief attacks the very nature of God. It loses the right to talk about God or to claim to be Christian, let alone to correct other people. Jesus never thought ministering or receiving healing was too much about selfish comfort, or some unspiritual motive. He had only praise for those who came to him for physical healing. He characterized his own mission with healing, both in word and deed. He offered the highest commendations about those who demanded healing as something that ought to be taken for granted. He said, "Woman, great is your faith!" And he said, "I have never seen faith like this in all of Israel!" He never said something like this about those who suffered poverty and sickness, all the while playing the humble victims. He never praised what human orthodoxy exalted as spiritual heroes – those who Christians admire today. Peter said that God anointed Jesus, who went about doing good, healing those who were oppressed by the devil. To devalue the ministry of healing is to devalue Jesus Christ. To claim that healing and other miracles have ceased is to claim that the Lord of All has become irrelevant.

So what if we desire comfort, if it is a comfort that is guaranteed by the nature of God and the promise of the gospel? If God's nature is healing, and if God's promise is healing, then it means that God wants this comfort for me even more than I want it for myself. Thus I have a duty to desire it. Healing is integral to the gospel. If it is not selfish or carnal to desire a healthy spirit, then it is not selfish or carnal to desire a healthy body. Yet somehow religious tradition has made people feel like they are robbing God, that they are somehow spiritual criminals, to insist on receiving healing from him through faith, according to his own word. False teachers have tried to make people feel bad about themselves for persisting in faith in God for healing miracles. The truth is that it would be sinful to neglect or to reject the desire for a healthy body by faith, just like it would be sinful to neglect or to reject the desire for a healthy spirit by faith. What, do you think that you are too good for God's help, a help that he guarantees by the blood of his Son? How is that spiritual? It is nothing but pride. It is the same kind of pride that causes an unbeliever to deny his sinful condition and to receive mercy through Jesus Christ. If you have the pride of an unbeliever, a pride that rejects the blood of Christ, then how can you claim to be a believer? Your faith is only a formality. Your worship is fake. Healing is the gospel, just as much as forgiveness is the gospel, as much as justification is the gospel, and as much as sanctification is the gospel. Jesus came to save the whole person. The effects of sin are not only spiritual, but also intellectual, emotional, physical, financial, relational, and so on. Jesus repairs and enhances all these areas of our lives. Adam's transgression plunged humanity into all kinds of ruin. But the Bible says that the gift of God is not like the trespass of man, and that what Jesus gained for us is greater than what Adam lost for us.

The gospel magnifies the effects of the work of Jesus. Anyone who despises physical healing also despises Jesus Christ. This person has no respect for the blood of God. Anyone who downplays physical healing by faith in Christ is ashamed of him. He is ashamed of God's plan of redemption. This person's preaching curses the work of God. Healing is the trademark of Jesus Christ, and he said that whoever is not for him is against him. You don't even need to be against healing. If you are not for the doctrine and ministry of miracle healing by faith, you are against Jesus. If you are silent about this, or if you claim to remain neutral, you are an enemy of God. You must abandon your pride and risk your reputation



to take a stand on this matter of healing. If you are ashamed of Jesus, then he is ashamed of you. On the other hand, a person who preaches physical healing by faith in Christ as blatantly and frequently as he can is someone who honors the compassion of God. He loves Jesus Christ and follows his teachings and examples. Let us never be high-minded or pseudo-spiritual about this. Let us never suppose we are too good or too holy for something like the healing of the body. If we are so spiritual, we would have faith to receive all that God wants to give us.

Any ministry that does not preach and practice miracle healing, or that does not support or align with a ministry of miracle healing, and that does not do this fiercely and constantly, is not a gospel ministry. It may attempt to look like one, and when we catch God looking the other way we may call it a gospel ministry to make everyone feel religious and orthodox, but it does not measure up to even the most basic and obvious definition of a gospel ministry. Jesus never commissioned any gospel ministry without miracle healing, and there is no gospel ministry in the Bible without miracle healing. The Bible does not know about a God or a Jesus that has no healing. The Bible does not know about a gospel that has no healing, or even one that has only occasional healing. It is not up to us to decide that healing is not essential enough. Both the nature of God and the doctrine of salvation put healing front and center. Just as we would not leave the atonement or the deity of Christ out of our preaching, we must never leave healing out of our preaching. That is, unless we wish to preach a counterfeit Jesus.

In fact, healing is often extended to unbelievers before they come to Christ in faith, and it is often given to those who would never come to Christ. Thus even if you decide to leave out some things from your preaching, you never have an excuse to leave out healing from your preaching, because even the unbelievers should know about it. It follows that a church that does not preach and practice miracle healing by faith does not live up to what it means to be a gospel church. Of course, you can call it a gospel church if you wish – you can say anything you want to say – but the Bible is not even aware that there can be a church of Jesus Christ without miracle healing. Both Christians and non-Christians should know about the ministry of healing. Yet nowadays unbelievers know what Christians think about abortion, homosexuality, movies, music, economics, politics, oh, especially politics, but most of them do not even know about miracle healing. If they think about it at all, they assume that the Christians themselves do not believe it, and that those who believe in healing are considered mentally unstable heretics by other Christians. Are the people that anoint themselves to represent the Christian faith before the world much more "Christian" than the heathens? Many of them are in fact unsaved. The truth is that the Christian faith is their political stance, not their true belief and way of life. This is why there is no faith for miracles, healings, visions, and prophecies. These people have hijacked the Christian faith to make a political and religious platform for themselves. They really have nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you say, "Surely you are going too far." Now be careful which side you are on, lest you turn against Christ and slap him in the face. I am only pointing out the obvious, and the unavoidable implications. You may ask, "Isn't it better than nothing, if a church leaves out only healing, but preaches about everything else correctly?" First, if you leave

out healing, it is impossible to preach about everything else correctly, because healing is integral to the gospel, to the work of Christ, to the nature of God, and to the nature of man. You cannot say that you would leave out the deity of Christ or the atonement for sin, but preach everything else correctly. Second, if we are able and eager to preach the gospel in all its fullness, and if there are other people like us, why do we still need those who refuse? What if there is a church that calls the Holy Spirit a pig, but calls Jesus Christ the Son of God? Would you say that it is at least correct about Jesus? But was Jesus anointed by a pig? Perhaps you consider it an acceptable compromise, but I damn that church to hell. Where they seem to be correct, we are more correct. Where they are entirely derelict, we are faithful and fierce. So why should we tolerate them, instead of pushing them off a cliff and move on?

If anti-faith and anti-miracle ministers and groups were ever useful, they are not useful anymore. God has exploited them for his own purpose. The salt now has no flavor, and it is ready to be thrown out and stepped on by men. They are holding people back, and they should be discarded and forgotten. The church has recovered to a point that we no longer need teachers who refuse to teach the word of God as it is written. It has reformed indeed, and then reformed again. There are those who refuse to continue after the first small step, who after they have rejected Satan, refuse to continue with Christ and welcome him in all his fullness. But there is only one Christ. If you do not receive him -- all of him, since he is one -- then you reject him. For the church to move forward, it must cast aside these useless people like wet dog poo, and leave them behind to die. If reformation after reformation still leaves so much trash around, then a revolution is in order. Don't reform, revolt! We shall do this without hesitation or regret. We follow God, not men. And we want to continue with God. We will not be respectful toward worthless scums and their wet dog poo theology. You give yourselves a bunch of degrees and titles, and now you think you can dictate to me what I must or must not obey in God's commands, and what I can or cannot believe in God's promises? You wish! Go jump off a cliff. Listen, go put all those certificates and credentials that your stupid friends gave you in a suitcase, tie it around your neck, and jump off a cliff.

People wish to talk about balance, and this is usually to limit in others what they themselves fear or hate in God. Balance is not wrong when it is applicable to the topic, but more often than not it is used to introduce unbelief. The idea is rarely applicable, and often meaningless. An example of balance is when Paul instructed the Corinthians to continue speaking in tongues, but add prophecy to their gatherings. His solution to an apparent disorderly use of tongues was to increase the intensity and diversity of supernatural ministries. He never considered the suspension of any supernatural ministry even in the face of apparent abuse, not even the very gift being abused. He only added more supernatural gifts to the mix. Even so, Paul did not think that the Corinthians overemphasized tongues, since he said, "I speak in tongues more than all of you." The problem was not an overemphasis, if such a thing were possible, but the Corinthians were apparently selfish and disruptive with speaking in tongues. There is no indication that it is possible to overemphasize any ministry pertaining to the supernatural. And there is no indication that it is possible to overemphasize physical healing by faith in Christ.

Nevertheless, if a group ever becomes selfish and disruptive with healing, then we ought to suggest that they continue to heal the sick, but also cast out demons!

We ought to be as extreme as we can in every doctrine of righteousness. It is impossible to overemphasize faith, love, and hope, the greatness and compassion of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and other things pertaining to the gospel. The problem is almost always a failure to be extreme enough. Have you noticed that, when people talk about balance, it is always because they want you to do less of what you are doing? When they mention balance, how come it is never to encourage you to do more? They never say, "You need to maintain balance with this doctrine on miracle healing. So you need to teach it at least twenty times more often." It is always to say you are doing too much, not too little. You see, they are not interested in right balance or proportion. If they can have their way, you would not be doing any of it at all. Like many things in counterfeit orthodoxy, balance is also a scam. If we are going to be unbalanced, let us preach too much healing, and not too little. There is no basis to think that this is even possible, just like it seems impossible to preach too much about faith toward God and love for Jesus Christ. If we are going to be obsessed, let us never be obsessed with politics, or philosophy, or the interests of this world, but let us be obsessed with receiving and ministering healing. It is virtually impossible to teach about healing too much or too often. If you love what Jesus loves, you can never be wrong.

People who preach balance to you are doing none of what you are doing. The things that they are telling you to do less of, they are not doing at all. So what happened to the balance? The imbalance has always been teaching too little about faith for miracles and answers to prayer, practicing too little of the ministry of healing and prophecy, experiencing too little of the promises concerning visions and dreams, and signs and wonders. This imbalance has existed for many centuries. To restore balance would seem the church needs to focus on these things exclusively! The call for balance, for orthodoxy, for order, and all such things, become the people's testimony against themselves in the sight of God.

If they complain that we are talking too much about miracle healing, are they talking about miracle healing at all? What does balance mean? If you lay hands on people for healing two hundred times a week, do they lay hands on people one hundred times? Do they lay hands on people for healing fifty times a week? How about ten times? How about one time each year? Do they command the cripple to walk or the cancer to leave only once every decade? Is that balance? Or, have they never done it at all? If you encounter a thousand sick people, should you pray for only five hundred to receive healing? Is that balance? Should you pray for one hundred? How about only ten? Is that balance? Or by balance, do they mean you should pray for none of them, and that if you do pray for them, you might not expect any to receive miracle healing? How many have been healed under their ministry? Right. Zero.

They are not interested in this meaningless thing called balance. This is subterfuge. The reality is that they wish to suppress the truth about healing in their wickedness, just like the reprobates suppress their knowledge about God. They wish to silence a pillar of the gospel, and still call themselves the best kind of Christians. They pretend to be the most upstanding

leaders and members in the church of God, but they work against Jesus Christ from within his congregations. They are much worse than the unbelievers in their hypocrisy.

When it comes to God's promises that are explicit and undeniable, "balance" – or any such virtuous sounding idea -- is something that religious frauds use to suppress something that they cannot outright refute, but that they refuse to belief and obey. It is a rhetorical trick. It sounds so virtuous. Who would oppose balance? When it is a balance between God and Satan, faith and unbelief, obedience and rebellion, I will damn balance to hell all the way. Yet the frauds do not even have this kind of balance, because when they speak of balance, they mean that you should not do what they oppose at all. Thus they stand with Satan, unbelief, and rebellion all the way.

Jesus said that God ensures the fields are dressed even better than Solomon, and we are worth more than they. Jesus guaranteed that if we will seek first the kingdom of God, then all the things that the pagans pursue – mammon, food, clothing, and all such things – will be added to us. The religious frauds cannot deny that Jesus said all of this and more. So they urge balance. But what in the world would balance mean in something like this? Huh?! Tell me, what would it mean? Can you teach too much of what Jesus said? Can you believe too much of what Jesus said? Can you practice too much of what Jesus said? What would balance mean? What would orthodoxy mean? What would humility mean? Jesus said that a wise man is like someone who builds his house on a solid foundation, so that when a storm comes he remains standing. Balance or no balance, this is the minimum, if there is a minimum. To teach what Jesus said half the time and contradict him half the time is not balance, but heresy. To believe what he said half the time and doubt him half the time is not balance, but unbelief. To obey what he said half the time and do something opposite half the time is not balance, but rebellion.

Do they teach that "all these things" – mammon, food, clothing, and all such things that the pagans seek and worry about – will be added to God's people? This is in fact one of the more baseline promises on the topic. God has said far more extravagant things about material prosperity and abundance for those who have faith. Do they teach it once a week, once a month, once a year? How about once a decade? Have they ever taught it at all? If they read it to their people by accident, do they affirm it or do they try to explain it away, saying that it is subject to the "will of God," as if it is ever the will of God to contradict his own promise? Is this balance? Is this orthodoxy? The truth is that they just preach poverty, sickness, and suffering, and leave the whole matter there. They have never had any faith. They have never believed what Jesus said.

It is time to stop explaining ourselves to such people over and over again. We are not the ones in the wrong. We are not the ones disobeying the gospel. They are. They are worse than the unbelievers. It is time to attack those who refuse to affirm all of God's guarantees in the gospel, whether it is healing, or prosperity, or prophecy, or visions and dreams, or signs and wonders, or favor and success, or supernatural wisdom and creativity, or the advancement of the gospel, and hundreds of other things that belong to us through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to overemphasize God's guarantees concerning our protection and prosperity. When we walk by faith in his word, everything we have comes from him, and there is no place for boasting. Our success is his success. Our health is the health of the body of Christ. Our prosperity is the prosperity of God's people. Human orthodoxy wishes to take all of this away from the kingdom of God. My success is mine to enjoy, but it is not my success, but his success, because he is the one who gives us success according to his promise, made by his own will. I enjoy success because he is successful. We are his glory on this earth. He demonstrates his goodness by what he does for his people. We are the light of the world, and this light comes from him.

People who are against healing, prophecy, miracles, and all the things that reveal the glory of God through us...these people are not interested in following Jesus. If they wish to follow Jesus, they would say what he said and do what he did. They are interested in replacing Jesus. They want a Jesus that does not expose their lack of faith and power. They want a Jesus that does not expose their religious arrogance and wickedness. They want a Jesus that never interferes with their customs and doctrines. But there is only one Jesus, the one recorded in the Bible. This is the one that their religious forefathers killed. They oppose us, because they see him in us.

Certainly there are other ministries in the church, but every believer is called to preach the gospel and heal the sick – whatever our calling, none can abstain from this -- and among us, this classic combination will be our focus. Our success is guaranteed. God did not send us forth to preach the forgiveness of sins intending that no one would believe and be saved. He will convert people. He will cause them to believe our message, and cause them to follow Christ. The same is true for healing. God did not send us forth to preach the healing of diseases intending that no one would receive and be healed. When we tell people that there is healing for our bodies through Jesus Christ, people will receive faith for healing, and God will heal them. When we pray for the sick, God will answer. When we speak to diseases, they will obey. When we lay our hands on sick people, they will recover. Then God shall be honored and praised.

## 7. PREHISTORIC ORTHODOXY

Cessationism is founded on the traditional defective account of the divine inspiration of Scripture. Although we make the usually harmless generalization that the apostles and prophets wrote the Bible, significant portions were not written by them, or not known to be written by them. To address this, Christians invent the principle that these documents were nevertheless written by those who were closely associated with the apostles and prophets. However, they arbitrarily dictate this principle without warrant, and they also arbitrarily decide how closely associated with the apostles and prophets these other authors needed to be. In addition, the relationships of these authors to the apostles, and the scribes to the prophets, are often uncertain, and offer a weak foundation for something as weighty as divine inspiration. The entire difficulty is self-inflicted due to the false assumption that every word in the Bible must be written or approved by apostles and prophets.

Once we point out that God alone is the actual author of Scripture, it becomes evident that the matter of human authorship is unable to undermine the inspiration of Scripture, because it has no decisive relevance in the first place. God can write on tablets of stones, speak in a voice from heaven, cause a donkey to talk, make stones cry out, or move a man to write his words. God is the one who speaks and writes. Although he often used the apostles and prophets, he could cause anything to happen through anyone he chooses. The outcome would carry a divine legitimacy regardless of the means chosen by God. By his Spirit, he took hold of various men and caused them to write out his words. Then, by his providence, he secured these documents and compiled them into one final volume.

The traditional theory of inspiration is fatally fallacious. It is theologically amateurish, and curiously incompetent. This is the doctrine of historic orthodoxy and the creeds. It begins with the exaltation of the apostles. Maintaining this idolatry as non-negotiable, it adjusts everything else to accommodate it. As a result, it paints itself into a corner and leads to the destruction of the doctrine of biblical inspiration, the very doctrine that it claims it wishes to protect. The error is so obvious and avoidable, it is amazing that centuries of scholars and creeds have committed themselves to something so outright stupid. Perhaps it is not so amazing, but what we ought to expect from man-made traditions. Religious bias against biblical teaching makes people stupid. They were stupid to have invented this doctrine. They pretended to secure the divine inspiration of Scripture, but in reality they conspired to enforce a false narrative concerning the cessation of the powers of faith and of the Spirit.

When we discard the historic orthodox idolatry that places the Bible on men, but instead place the Bible on God, and God alone, the difficulties disappear. Divine inspiration applies to all of the Bible, not because the whole thing was written or approved by apostles and prophets, but because the whole thing was written by God. All Scripture was written by God, even breathed out directly by him (2 Timothy 3:16). It makes no difference whether he used apostles or chipmunks to write it. Whatever you think the chipmunks lacked that the apostle possessed, God could have supplied if he had chosen the chipmunks. If you deny this, then you do not even believe in God, let alone divine inspiration. Therefore, to terminate the apostleship does not terminate the possibility of additions to Scripture. If the cessationists wish to use their line of reasoning to reach the conclusion they desire, it would

not be enough to kill the apostles, but they must kill God also, because God is the real author of Scripture, even the only author, and he can make apostles and chipmunks out of anything, at any time in history. If the cessationists think that any potential author of Scripture must not remain living in order to prevent any potential addition to Scripture, then it is not enough for them to eliminate the existence of apostles and prophets, and the gifts of the Spirit, but they must eliminate the existence of God. According to their reasoning, this is the only way to prevent any possible addition to Scripture.

If it is enough to say that God has completed the Bible according to his providence – as I would say – then it makes no difference to say that there are still apostles today. Apostles cannot add to Scripture just because they are apostles – they never could. Prophets cannot add to Scripture just because they are prophets – they never could. However, if it is not enough to simply say that God has completed the Bible, then neither is it enough to say that there are no more apostles, because God can always add to Scripture without the apostles. Or he can always make more apostles. The cessationists and traditionalists must then destroy God himself to guarantee the completion of the Bible, and I would not be surprised if they are eager to do it. The issue never had anything to do with the continuation of miracles or the gifts of the Spirit. God alone is the author of Scripture, not apostles and prophets, not miracles, not the gifts of the Spirit. If God has not stopped writing, even the cessation of the gifts of the Spirit says nothing about whether there would be additions to the Bible. In fact, he could wipe out all of humanity and still continue to add to Scripture. It is a testimony to the feeble-mindedness of the framers of the historic creeds and the defenders of human traditions that the inspiration of Scripture has been constructed on such an outrageously fallacious foundation, and then even weaponized as a test of orthodoxy and as ammunition to persecute those of purer doctrine and stronger faith.

The tradition of Man results in the murder of God. The world witnessed this in the days of Christ. Historic orthodoxy goes back only as far as men wish to remember. But God had his own orthodoxy long before there was historic anything. Authentic orthodoxy proceeds from the original revelation of God, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Stupid people champion historic orthodoxy. Authentic orthodoxy from the word of God goes all the way from prehistoric to futuristic, from primal to eternal. This is because authentic orthodoxy has always been the same, and always will be the same. "Historic" is a childish, self-damning boast. The issue is whether you are correct, not whether you have been wrong for a LONG time. If a doctrine contradicts or deviates from the word of God, then it is heresy. When that happens, I don't care about your creed. Either you burn your creed, or you burn with your creed. Choose. To call the doctrine "orthodoxy" would make it a term of self-damnation. And then to add "historic" to it means that the tradition has refused to repent for many generations. The boast becomes exponentially demonic.

Just as all of the words of the Bible came from God, all of the miracles in the Bible came from God, not from the apostles, and all the gifts of the Spirit came from God, not from the apostles. For miracles to die, God must die. The cessationist slippery slope argument in historic orthodoxy is that if apostleship has ceased, then at least one gift has ceased, and this opens the way to the conclusion that all gifts have ceased. The argument is worse than mere sophistry, because it is a manifesto for atheism. Since God is the one who inspired

the Bible and performed the miracles, the cessationist argument must begin with God, not with the apostles. If God has ceased to exist, then of course miracles have ceased to happen. As long as God is alive, apostle or no apostle, gift or no gift, "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23). Even if apostleship has ceased, even if all the gifts of the Spirit have ceased, and in fact, even if no one in history has ever performed a miracle by the power of God, it would still be possible for me to experience all the things represented by the gifts of the Spirit – even if I must be the first and only one – because my faith in God has not ceased. The doctrine of the cessation of miracles is nothing other than an excuse for the cessation of faith – by their own way of reasoning, even the cessation of faith in the existence of God. The debate on the "gifts" of the Spirit is a red herring and a scam. Prehistoric orthodoxy prevails.

\*Adapted from Vincent Cheung, "A Cascading Avalanche of Horse Manure"



## 8. SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE

The claim that miracles are the "signs of an apostle" would backfire against Paul. Many believers other than the apostles worked miracles. Some of the most spectacular visions and miracles recorded in the Bible happened to other disciples such as Stephen (Acts 6:15, 7:55-56) and Philip (Acts 8:39-40). In fact, from the first moment about 90% of those who received the miracle power of the Holy Spirit were not apostles (Acts 1:8, 15, 2:4). This percentage increased to possibly about 99.6% within a matter of hours (Acts 2:16-18, 38, 41). Since the number of the original apostles remained the same, and the number of believers who received the Spirit continued to increase, this percentage also continued to increase, so that within a very short time, practically 100% of those who could work miracles were not apostles (1 Corinthians 12:7-10).

The claim is then made that even if miracles were performed by others, they were done by those who were associated with the apostles and approved by the apostles. This is rubbish. As we noted above, right at the beginning about 90% of those who obtained supernatural power received it directly from Jesus at the same moment with the apostles and on equal footing with the apostles. God made no distinction between them. And again, since the number of the original apostles remained the same, but the number of believers who received the Spirit continued to increase, after a short time practically 0% of those who could work miracles had direct contact with the apostles. Only several of them could have received individual attention or approval from the apostles, but Paul said that in every service, every one of the believers could have operated in the supernatural powers of the Spirit for the benefit of all.

Moreover, the apostles never possessed exclusive authority to judge every prophecy or miracle. Paul acknowledged that the believers in the local assembly could judge the spiritual manifestations. He did not limit the right to judge even to the church leaders, but he acknowledged the legitimacy of those familiar with the manifestations. Thus the ones who offered prophecies in the local assembly could judge others who offered prophecies (1 Corinthians 14:29). Therefore, virtually 0% of all spiritual manifestations among Christians were monitored or judged by the apostles, but by the local leaders and the believers themselves. Any person who received Christ and who also received the Spirit could immediately join the Christians in healing and prophetic ministries without ever meeting an apostle or even knowing there was such a thing as an apostle.

The principle of apostolic association and approval is a theological scam. This line of thinking has been applied to the doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture. The historic orthodox formulation for the doctrine of Scripture places authorship on the apostles and the prophets, and since this immediately fails due to the fact that significant portions were not written by them, it also accepts those who are assumed to be their associates. This in fact destroys the doctrine of Scripture. The apostles and prophets never said that their associates could write Scripture. And they had many associates. Could all of them have added to Scripture? If only those who were specifically approved could do it, where are the records showing which ones were approved? Thus the orthodox theory that places divine inspiration upon the apostles and prophets – upon men – paints itself into a corner, with

the result that the inspiration of Scripture itself appears to self-destruct. This is a testimony to the spiritual and intellectual incompetence of the theologians throughout history, who had reviewed this theory of divine inspiration over and over again, for century after century. Divine inspiration must be placed on God, and God alone (2 Timothy 3:16).

The standard claim of historic orthodoxy and evangelical theology about miracles would backfire against Paul. It would totally undermine his apostleship. Once it is said that miracles were signs of an apostle, but that others could perform miracles if they were associates of apostles, then 2 Corinthians 12:12 would become an absurdly fallacious assertion of apostleship from Paul, because it would mean that Paul himself could be nothing more than an associate of an apostle. In fact, it seems that he sometimes had to refute precisely this accusation, and when he did, he did not focus on his miracles as if they were signs of an apostle, but he related the history of his calling, he appealed to God as his witness (Galatians 1:11-2:10), and as he does in this letter to the Corinthians, he referred to the manner and the fruit of his ministry (Matthew 7:15-23; Galatians 2:7-8; 2 Corinthians 1:12-14, 3:1-3, 4:1-2, 5:11-20, 6:3-13, 7:2-7, 10:1-12:10). The traditional claim about the signs of an apostle is a linchpin of cessationism, but the first victim is Paul himself.

As for 2 Corinthians 12:12, it says that the signs of an apostle were worked with patience and with miracles. Along with the signs of an apostle, he had patience. Along with the signs of an apostle, he had miracles. He never said that the miracles themselves proved that he was an apostle, or that only apostles could perform miracles. And he did not say that only apostles could have patience. He wrote to the same group of believers and said that every person could operate in the powers of the Spirit in every service. He was responding to those who claimed to be "super apostles," but were not apostles at all. They claimed to have received visions and revelations. Paul did not deny this directly, but he said that it compelled him to boast like a fool and declared that he was not inferior to them in supernatural experiences. If miracles were signs of an apostle, then Paul should have said that these experiences never happened to the false apostles; otherwise, all of them could have been apostles. And if miracles were signs of an apostle, he would not have said that he talked like a fool when he claimed that he had these experiences as well.

If supernatural experiences were the signs of an apostle, why would he say that it was futile to draw much attention to them even as he was defending his claim to be an apostle? He said it was foolishness. If it was the most relevant thing to apostleship, why did Paul say "there is nothing to be gained" by talking about it (2 Corinthians 12:1)? Paul acknowledged that false prophets could perform signs and wonders, but he said that even Satan can appear as an angel of light. How meaningful would miracles be as signs of an apostle in light of this? Of course an apostle can perform miracles, but any believer can perform miracles. An apostle should mention his miracles, for without them he could be less than an ordinary believer. He needs to say more, such as to include an account of his calling, his suffering for the gospel, the integrity of his conduct, and the fruit of his ministry. Paul argued for his apostleship by demonstrating that he was the most hard-core for the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:7-11, 23-33).

The religious charlatans who assert that miracles are signs of an apostle wish to take miracles away from God's faithful people. However, the effect is that they have taken away Paul's declaration of his own apostleship, and made him appear to have offered a ludicrous and self-defeating argument. This is their historic orthodoxy. This is their official consensus. This is the disgraceful level of theological competence in your heroes of the faith, who drafted your creeds and established your churches. Don't avoid the issue. Think about what this means. Grow up. Stop boasting about religious traditions and theological pedigrees. Stop defending nonsense and fighting over rubbish. They have made hundreds of such errors, obvious errors that permeate every aspect of doctrine and conduct, and they have not detected them after centuries of studies and debates. And this is the standard by which they judge all things and by which they persecute those who disagree. They cannot notice even such a glaring blunder in their thinking, and they dare call other people heretics? They are the worst heretics. Then their followers think they can judge someone who has come to fix their mess. And this is why Christian scholarship is one big clown show.

\*Adapted from Vincent Cheung, "A Thorn in the Flesh"

## 9. WHY KICK SO HARD?

When facing a crisis or controversy sparked by a disagreement on doctrine, if I were you I would first examine how committed I am -- and how committed I ought to be -- to the cause. Jesus said that someone who begins construction should first count the cost, lest he cannot finish and bring shame upon himself. He said that someone who goes to war should consider if he can attain victory. If you take a stand for the word of God, you better follow through to the end. How serious is it? If someone receives a deep cut on his leg, or if one of his bones breaks, he will heal as long as the man is alive and intact. The injured part is not unimportant, but it is not so essential that the whole man collapses. Now what if I could somehow rip out all the blood vessels from his body? This would not be something that can naturally heal or be endured. How integral are God's promises, Christ's commands, and the Spirit's endowments to the normal Christian doctrine and experience? Do you think all these things are only cosmetic issues to the body of Christ? If we refuse these things, would it only be like a cut on the leg? Or would it be like ripping out all the blood vessels from a man's body? What do you think? You must decide for yourself based on what you honestly perceive from Scripture. Can you tear out these things from the gospel, and still have the gospel? Really? If so, then keep your church, and keep your friends. But if ripping out the gospel in the gospel actually destroys the gospel, then you must continue in the doctrines of faith no matter what, so that you may keep your God.

Preachers are often more zealous for ethical principles that grow out of the gospel than for the gospel itself. What if the controversy you face concerns abortion? Or if your church has been supportive of homosexual doctrine and behavior, what would you do? Still want to keep your friends? Many churches would have split six different ways by now, and no one would bother to consult me. Jesus said that the measure or standard you use to judge others is the measure or standard by which you will be judged. Christians demand unbelievers to obey the ethical standards of the Bible, but at the same time they denounce the supernatural promises of God and the missional commands of Christ. Christians claim to know the Bible when they use it to condemn the unbelievers, but they also condemn the things that the same Bible teaches – faith for miracles, healing the sick, casting out demons, prophecies and tongues, visions and dreams, signs and wonders, the baptism of the Spirit for supernatural endowments, and a long list of other things. The same Bible that they use to condemn others will be the same Bible that condemns them. What, aren't the unbelievers murderers, idolaters, adulterers, and liars? Sure enough, and all these can be forgiven. But religious people blaspheme the Holy Spirit, and that will never be forgiven. As Jesus said, many will come from the east and from the west, and they will sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. You think he was just waxing poetic, or being sentimental? This will really happen. It first happened to the people of Israel, and now it is happening to the people of the church. Many who are now condemned by the Bible, will repent and believe the Bible – all of it – and they will be saved. But many who now condemn others by the Bible, will be condemned by this same Bible, because they never believed it.

Cessationism is far more destructive than the sins of the unbelievers. In fact, cessationism and cessationists have encouraged the continuation of sin in the church and in the world, because they have deliberately suppressed the full spectrum of the things that God wants to say and show to the world. If God is silent, hidden, and inactive, then sin and sinners run rampant. There is no sense of threat, no sense of consequence, no sense of holiness and otherworldly presence and power among them. This single betrayal by the church has allowed the global historic exponential growth of a multitude of sins. The world is increasingly reaping what the church has sown, including depravity, sickness, and poverty. We cannot hide much of the gospel from the world -- if we still have a gospel after that -- and then demand the world to conform to the implications of this gospel. If there is no God, then we cannot demand people to obey the commands of God. If there is no gospel, then we cannot demand people to follow the ethics of this gospel. The implications of cessationism pertain to not only core issues such as faith in God, healing and prophecy, the effects of the atonement, Christ's present work of baptism with the Spirit, and the like, but they pertain to all areas of life and society.

If you have concluded that the gospel is the gospel, and that the gospel is one, then you must remain firm and unmovable. Go all in with Christ. Go all in with faith. Commit to this fight. Cessationism must cease. This is one issue that warrants wars and riots in the churches. It demands us to reevaluate creeds, redefine orthodoxy, restructure leadership, and renounce tradition. It demands us to defund anyone and disband anything that persists in this cessation of faith. The heresy strikes at the gospel in such a devastating and pervasive manner that unless a group undergoes a conversion to the truth not unlike the individual's born again experience, it warrants the dissolution of the church, or seminary, or denomination. Just as a man cannot be saved unless he is born again, a church of unbelief and tradition cannot be saved unless it is converted. A half-baked recovery is worse than death. Nevertheless, if you are in a situation where there is some hope for change, and especially where you have some authority and influence, a revolution is not the first thing you could attempt. You can use a long-term approach. The word of God is like seeds, and by sowing seeds -- or thoughts -- into people's minds one can sometimes overturn generations of spiritual famine. Some plant life can begin as a seed, but as it sprouts and grows, it can work through the cracks of a stone wall and eventually bring down the entire structure. A little leaven works through the whole dough. This is how unbelief had worked in the church through the centuries, and it brought down the momentum of faith established by the apostles, until the church has come to represent only senseless rituals and petty scruples to the world, instead of a voice and power from another dimension.

This works for truth and holiness just as much as it does false doctrine and sin. Satan sows seeds of doubt, but you can sow seeds of faith. You can throw out thoughts here and there about God's promise to work miracles, and how we can heal the sick and cast out demons in the name of Jesus. You can throw out questions here and there to cast doubt on traditional doctrines of unbelief. Most of the people adhere to the orthodoxy of unbelief not as a result of a thorough and honest study, but because of hearsay and custom. Make them question these things. There is often a need to take an offensive approach more than a defensive approach. Faith has been attacked by the church for more than 1500 years, and unbelief has been orthodoxy. Traditional religious assumptions must be challenged. However, if

you are speaking to your own people over a period of time, you can begin this slowly and gently, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little, and only become more forceful and condemning as they prove to be obstinate against God. You ought to escalate the content and the rhetoric in any case. This is applied to your own people if they are hardened, but if they go along with you, then let them band together to become a hostile force toward the unbelief of outsiders and other groups. In any case, even if you take the long-term approach, you must remember that the changes must eventually go all the way, or there is in fact no genuine transformation.

There must be some substance to what you say to the people. Break through their excuses with well-reasoned explanations from Scripture, but then also expose their motives for persisting in unbelief. Unbelief is never sincere or innocent. It is never only about what the truth is. There is also something about themselves that they wish to protect against the truth. Unless you address this latter thing, they will keep resisting even if you answer all their objections. If you have been speaking truth, do not apologize for anything that you have done. Proceed with wisdom, and avoid causing unnecessary trouble for yourself, but be brave and never retreat. If even those of us who know the truth compromise, and if we allow ourselves to be silenced, then who is there to show the way out of dead religion? The voice of faith must become stronger and stronger. Faith must become more aggressive and overbearing. People are accountable to God to accept the truth regardless of how it is presented to them. It is still their fault if they refuse it. Since they have the Bible, they should have come to the same conclusions even without us. They ought to be encouraging us and supporting us, not resisting us. The fact that we need to make any effort to convince them is already a blight on their record with God. I had so thirsted after the living water that I would have gleefully accepted Christ even if you had written the gospel on a baseball bat and clobbered me senseless with it. I would not have blamed the baseball bat as an excuse to refuse. There are people who condemn those who violently kick down the prison doors with the shoes of the gospel, and not condemn those who imprisoned them in the first place. They complain to their liberators, "Why kick so hard?" And these are imbeciles who would choose to remain in prison even after the doors have been kicked down. We see people like these all over our churches and seminaries. Some make entire careers out of maintaining this status quo. Thus it is often better to disband and start over.

## **10. A FIELD OF BLOOD**

The Bible teaches repentance, and if you refuse to teach repentance to a sinner, then his blood is on your hands even if he would not have repented. Your dereliction of duty is itself sufficient basis to assign blame to you for the sinner's damnation. God himself explained this (Ezekiel 33:1-9).

By the same principle, the Bible teaches healing, and if you refuse to teach healing to a sick person, then his death is on your hands even if he would not have believed or recovered. Your dereliction of duty is itself sufficient basis to assign blame to you for the sick person's death.

Therefore, all those who claim to be Christians but who do not endorse miracle healing by faith in Christ are mass murderers. This is a direct application of a biblical principle. It involves no speculation, because it is irrelevant whether any sick person would have been healed, since the sin is in failing to tell the people about healing and to pray for their healing.

Anyone who has an opportunity to talk about Jesus Christ, but who does not teach about healing by faith in him, or even teaches against it, is a mass murderer. Anyone who is against this doctrine of healing, or who assigns the whole matter to some unknown “will of God” — when this sovereign God has guaranteed healing by his promise — is a bloody religionist who exploits people's suffering to advance his theological agenda. He is the worst kind of scum.

God has made the church a house of healing, but Christians have made it a field of blood.

## 11. COUNTERFEIT FAITH

If we define the terms correctly, there should not be a difference between assent to the word of God and trust in the word of God. This is because of what things the word of God says. They are such that if you agree or assent to them, then you also trust them. If you assent to the proposition, "I trust God," then you do trust God. The reason for the confusion is false assent. A person can pretend to assent to the word of God, but in fact he does not. As God said, "They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." People would say that this person has assent, but not trust, in order to make a distinction. However, the distinction should be between true and false assent, not assent and trust. It is important to grasp this because if we invent a distinction where there should not be one, then a person who has true assent toward the word of God would still attempt to develop something more in himself, which he considers to be trust, when he already trusts God, because he truly assents to his word.

We need to insist on the necessity of this true assent, or trust in the word of God. Nevertheless, we discuss assent in the first place because men have used it in their theological formulations, especially to create artificial distinctions. We can discard the term and return to what the Bible calls it, which is faith. The Bible says that, without faith, it is impossible to please God. We must have faith that God exists, and that God exists as a rewarder. This second part is usually neglected, but it is integral to true faith. We believe that there is a God, but what do we believe about this God? He is a rewarder of those who seek him. To those who have faith, God is not a punisher, he is not a taker, but he is a rewarder and a giver. Why is it that Christian teachers often present God as a punisher, taker, and withholder even to his own people? It is because they have no faith. It is because their religion is fundamentally different from a religion of faith. And God is not pleased with them. Since the Bible says that faith sees God as a rewarder, this means that if someone teaches God as a taker and withholder, then it must mean that this person has no faith, and that he is a false teacher. What rewards does God give? The Bible also tells us in the same context. It says that God rewards with victories that subdued entire nations, healing miracles that created new life in the wombs and raised the dead, miracles that shielded men from fires, lions, and swords, and things like these. Even when God grants the honor of martyrdom to a person of faith, it is the death of a hero, not the defeat of a spiritual loser who never truly believed God's promises.

However, there is a difference between merely admiring the word of God and believing the word of God. Now I do not want to overturn a false distinction about faith only to create another one. The distinction is still between true faith and false faith. My purpose is to use a descriptive word to discuss the way counterfeit faith often manifests. You can use a different word than "admire" if you wish. A person can admire the word of God and not agree with it, and not believe it. He admires it as an object of beauty, an object of culture and religion, an object of study and of debate. It is something he can make a hobby out of, or even a vocation to profit from. But this does not mean that he agrees with any of it. There is no sincere agreement, no belief in it, and no faith. The claim is that he lives before the face of God, and he can spit out a number of Latin phrases as he boasts about it, but the reality is that his heart is far from God. This is the condition of most professional



theologians. And it is also the condition of most everyday people who consider themselves knowledgeable in the things of God. They admire the word of God as an object that they fiddle with, not as a revelation from God that they believe and obey. It is not something that they would build their lives upon.

There are many people who present themselves as leaders of the faith. They will prescribe what you must think, and then order you to defend it. But when it comes time to act on the word of God, and to stake their lives on it, they make excuses. They spin out convoluted theories to explain why the word of God does not guarantee what it promises. Jesus said that a man who hears the word of God but does not do what it says is like a foolish man who builds his house on a foundation of sand, so that when a storm comes, the structure falls. This is like a theologian, or a pastor, or any church member who supposes himself spiritual, who hears the word of God and even admonishes others about it, but who refuses to build his life on God's teachings and promises, such as miraculous healing and supernatural prosperity, and when trouble comes, he is ruined. He becomes a victim of circumstances just like any unbeliever who has never known God. He is a stupid, worthless person.

He is an admirer, not a believer. He is a spectator and commentator to the things of God, not a participant. Perhaps he would like the word of God to be true, but he does not commit himself to it. He does not believe it. In fact, he would like other people to think that he believes it, to think that he is spiritual, that he is one of the faithful ones. But he is not. Even before a situation occurs where he is compelled to walk by faith and act on the word of God, he makes excuses. He hedges. He makes elaborate theological theories to prepare for failure. Those who truly believe the word of God and build their whole lives on it are heretics in his eyes, such as those who make momentous decisions based on God's promises to save, to heal, to protect, and to prosper. He considers such people who commit their lives to the word of God as fanatics, uneducated in theology. He persecutes such people in the name of God. The truth is that he wishes to destroy these people to protect himself, because their faith stands as a contrast to his hypocrisy.

This man calls himself a Christian, but he worships only the idea of God, and not the nature of God. He says, "God is sovereign!" Of course God is sovereign, but what does God do with his sovereignty? God declares that he forgives all our sins, and heals all our diseases. He declares that if we have faith, we would perform the same miracles that his Son performed, and even greater miracles. He declares that anyone who follows his Son can heal the sick and cast out demons. This is his sovereign declaration. This is what he does with his sovereignty. A sovereign God can promise anything he wishes, but once he has promised, he will always fulfill his word in his sovereignty. The false believer affirms the mere idea of the sovereignty of God, but he condemns what this God says that he does with his sovereignty. That is, he uses the idea of God's sovereignty to avoid God's own enforcement of his sovereignty. He uses the idea of God's sovereignty to avoid committing to any definite belief or outcome, even when this sovereign God has already declared what we must believe or what outcome we must expect. This man worships the idea of God, which is his own projection of one such deity, but he does not in fact worship God. His God is a spiritual hologram. The same is true with the Bible. The false believer loves the

idea of the Bible, but he rejects the content of the Bible. He says, "I will even die for the Bible!" But before the alarm clock sounds in the morning, he will have denied biblical healing three times on social media.

Many historic heroes of the faith, many framers of various creeds, and many modern theologians and leaders, are like this foolish man. They are admirers of Jesus Christ, and they want us to admire them for being such admirers of Jesus Christ, but they have never been believers. They admire, but they do not commit. You say, "Some died for what they believed." Did they die for what they believed, or did they die for what Jesus said? Jesus commanded the ministry of healing, prophecy, and miracles. Did they believe this? Did they heal the sick and cast out demons? And did they teach that all believers should do the same? Hearing me say this, some people strive hard to dig up one or two obscure references in their favorite heroes where they seem to have supported or experienced these things. But if you need to do this, you have already answered my question. Just stop. Jesus made this a most obvious doctrine. How come they died for what they believed about Christ, but they did not believe what Christ actually said? You see, they died for themselves.

Are you offended that I speak this way? Then I will say the same thing about you. Are you displeased with me because I spoke against Jesus Christ? Where have I done this? Or are you angry because I contradicted his commands and teachings, that I rejected his promises? Show me. I have done none of these things. You are offended because I criticized your human heroes, the idols that you worship instead of Christ. You are offended because I exposed them. And now I have exposed you. One who dies for what he believes is not necessarily a hero. He is a hero only if he dies for the word of God. If he has never committed his life to the word of God, then he dies for what he believes, not what God believes. He is committed to what he himself thinks, so much so that he would die for it. However, a person who dies for Buddhist doctrine does not become a Christian martyr.

Instead of being offended with me, shouldn't you be offended that your heroes did not believe what Jesus said? Rather than being angry with me, shouldn't you be angry with yourself, that you adore human heroes more than Christ? You say, "Perhaps they overlooked it. Perhaps they overlooked what Jesus commanded about the ministry of healing and prophecy...and hundreds of such things that are written all over the Bible." No. Either they never read the Bible, in which case they should not be your heroes, or they did not overlook it. This is one of the most simple, obvious, and extensive teachings in all of Scripture. Of course they saw it. They did not overlook it. They rejected it. They rejected what Jesus commanded. They rejected what Jesus promised. You did not overlook it either. You saw it when you read the Bible. No, you did not overlook it. You rejected it. You rejected Jesus Christ and condemned what he said.

The more you resist me on this, the more it becomes obvious that you are one of the hypocrites, a mere admirer of the Christian faith, a stupid person who hears the word of God but who does not commit to it by acting on it. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then you would act on what he said. This means that you would live as if his commands and promises are true. You would live as if those who seek first the kingdom of God would indeed receive mammon, food, clothing, and all the things that the pagans seek. You would

live as if Jesus took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses, so that you are healed. You would live as if you can lay hands on the sick and they would recover. You would live as if you can cast out demons. You would live as if you can receive visions and dreams and prophecies, and speak in tongues by the Holy Spirit. You would tell other people these things as solutions to their problems, as the instructions and promises to build their lives upon. The Bible teaches every one of these things, and if you reject every one of these things, on what basis do you call yourself a follower of Jesus? The only basis is your religious arrogance and delusion. You imagine yourself some pious saint, but you represent the worst of humanity.

Don't be stupid. If you are going to die for something, don't die for what you believe, but die for what Jesus said. And if what you believe is different from what Jesus said, then don't die at all. Dying for your mere opinion is the stupidest kind of martyrdom. Just recant.

## 12. IF ONLY THEY HAVE SUCH ZEAL

In "Predestination and Miracles," we saw that Jesus said Christians are chosen so that they may bear fruit, and the fruit refers to performing miracles in his name -- even greater miracles than Jesus himself performed. This is Jesus' doctrine of predestination. It is futile to say, "Predestined! Predestined! Predestined!" and not ask, "Predestined for what?" Jesus said that those who have faith are predestined for miracles. This cannot be ripped out of his doctrine of predestination. The extensive speech in John 14-16 is headlined by Jesus' decree of miracle ministry for all those who believe in him, and if we compare this with the rest of the Gospels, it is as if he takes more time talking about predestination for miracle ministry and spiritual endowments and praying for "what you will" than he did about predestination for eternal life. But this is not a competition. Eternal life begins now. For more than 1500 years, however, Christians have exchanged the paradigm-shifting promise for a pot of orthodox porridge. Jesus handed to the people of faith a miracle mantle that could shake all three realms, but like the worthless servant in one of his parables, Christians have buried it. They have abandoned divine treasure for human excrement, smearing it all over their church history, their creeds, their children, saying, "Behold, this is the God who led you out of Egypt!" Then they chase after those who run from the stench and scream, "Eat it! Eat it!"

Just as much as it refers to the fact of the decree of God, predestination refers to the content of the decree of God, that God has chosen his people to receive eternal life and divine power. Yet the zealous proponents of the doctrine of predestination reject much of what predestination intends to accomplish in the people of faith. This is ironic because the doctrine is supposed to acknowledge the supremacy of God, but the theologians have taken it upon themselves to dictate how God is permitted to exercise this supremacy, and at what periods and through whom, even though their conclusions contradict the word of God. Predestination, therefore, became a doctrine on the sovereignty of the theologians. God is not deceived -- we will reap what we sow. Unbelief will meet a violent end. It is the way of destruction, if not at our own hands, then at the hand of divine wrath. If we cannot have that which is of faith, then let us have nothing at all. Defund the theologians and disband the seminaries. Defund the pastors and disband the churches. Phinehas saved Israel from the plague when he took up a spear and pierced through the sinners among them, but Christians are too "Christ-like" to riot against cessationism and other anti-faith cults in their midst. Christ charged the temple and made his whip fly and the tables scatter. Meanwhile we are so in love with our fifty points of this-ism, three hundred Latin slogans for thatology, and twenty thousand articles of the Interplanetary Confession of Faith, and we are spraying water on everybody or drenching them in tubs, and slinging tiny crackers and grape juice in every direction, but we will not lift a finger to overturn those who anointed themselves to be leaders and teachers among us and who openly spread anti-faith propaganda against the one who call Lord. What a peaceful people we are! What Christ-like gentleness and tolerance! The self-righteousness of unbelief and the eagerness to remain under oppression is, to say the least, curious.

People would say to me, "For certain I see you are completely correct about this, and that person is wrong. But should you have called him that? Should have you said it this way?"

Isn't it a bit too harsh?" Well! Since he is the one who is wrong, since he is the one who has contradicted Jesus himself, and since he is the false teacher who deceives people, then why don't you take your stupid face and tell him that he is wrong and settle with him before you complain to me about how I state the truth about it? Since you have so much time to tell me how I should do my job, why don't you tell that other person how to do his first? And why don't you do your job, if you claim to be a believer? Stand up for the truth. Why don't you talk to him first, since even you admit he is the one who is wrong? Huh? Incredible! If you are going to nitpick, if you are going to complain, first do it to the one who is actually wrong. Why don't you nitpick the false teacher? Why don't you complain to the people who follow the false doctrines? I demonstrate someone's error, speaking with biblical rhetoric that effectively gains your attention and alarms you to the gravity of the situation, and the first one you complain to is me? Meanwhile you will not lift a finger against those who are in error. Should I thank you? Or are you still missing the point? You are Satan's trained monkey. Your natural instinct is not faith, not obedience, but religious propriety. You want to feel good about yourself by becoming involved in the situation, but you will not stand up to those who are in error. No wonder Christians are weak. No wonder they cannot overcome the slightest unbelief or the slightest error in doctrine. Just a bunch of useless idiots. Jesus called such people "worthless." If you can see that I am correct, you should be helping me, not wasting my time with foolish nonsense. If you don't like the way I do it, then do it the way you like. Dress up like a doll and talk in baby voices if you want. Use finger puppets and put on a show if you want. Act like an effeminate pervert if you want. Just do it. But do it to that other person who needs to hear it.

Someone wished to publish a version of "Predestination and Miracles" and asked if he should do it alongside any comments I may have made on James 4:3 in order to preempt a possible objection from the cessationist cults. The verse says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." This is so irrelevant to the thrust of "Predestination and Miracles" that of course the two should not be associated by force. The suggestion is so arbitrary I wondered if I ought to share my response at all. However, since James 4:3 has been exploited by religionists to hinder faith and prayer in general, my comments should be useful as a corrective to the common abuse. Still, this should not be released together with "Predestination and Miracles," because an objection based on James 4:3 against what Jesus said would be so farfetched as to become a distraction from his teaching on the matter. If the two are to be read in the same sitting for some reason, then my comments on James 4 should be read before my comments on John 14-15, and not the other way around.

Here is my answer:

But why would I address James 4:3 along with Jesus' teaching there in John 14-15? And why would anyone want to publish both together? Jesus declared that his followers would work miracles in his name as the natural fruit of their discipleship (John 14-15). On this topic of miracles, the reason he offered for failure was unbelief (Matthew 17:20). James himself, when he wrote about prayer by disciples in a different context, also offered unbelief as the reason for failure (James 1:6-7).

Now either you have not read James 4 (except for verse 3!) or your audience must be grotesquely spiritual. Let me explain. Open the Bible to James 4 and cover up verse 3. Read anything you want in chapter 4 except verse 3. Do you see it? James is talking about people who would scheme and even murder to get what they want (v. 2). He is talking about people who are jealous of what others have, and would wage war to take it for themselves (v. 2). He is talking about people who would be friends with the world in such a context (v. 4). These are verses right before and right after verse 3. Did you read them? If anyone challenges what I wrote in "Predestination and Miracles" -- if anyone challenges Jesus -- on the basis of verse 3, then they did not read verse 2 and 4, and the other verses in James 4. If James 4 is applied in conjunction with John 14-15, then this would mean that we are referring to people who would scheme and even commit murder, so that they could heal the sick and cast out demons. It would mean that these people would become jealous and even wage war to take tongues and prophecies from other people so that they could have these things for themselves. In fact, if James 4 is applied to John 14-15, it would mean that the world -- even the unbelievers, even those who hate Jesus Christ -- would want to work signs and wonders in the name of Jesus, so that these disciples who are super zealous for the ministry of miracles would wish to befriend them.

This is why the question makes no sense. Christians who would lie and scheme and cheat to receive spiritual power from heaven? People who would commit murder to participate in the miracle ministry of Jesus? Disciples who would wage war to gain spiritual gifts? Non-Christians who want to see God heal the sick and cast out demons in the name of Jesus? I suppose I do not know of anything like this kind of spiritual zeal in all of human history. And these must be the most spiritual kind of non-Christians the world has ever known. I was frustrated by the question, because either you have not understood what Jesus said, or you did not read James 4 yourself. Otherwise, I was just envious that you address an audience so zealous and spiritual that it is utterly grotesque.

To attain results in the supernatural ministry and lifestyle that Jesus promised, there is no need to murder, to cheat, to war, or to partner with sinners. We only need some faith. Let us not confuse the issue by explaining failure even before we begin to declare Jesus' promise of success, or permit the impression that James 4 is relevant to John 14-15, that is, unless you are indeed addressing such ultra-spiritual people the likes of which we have never dared hope to exist. Most important of all, do not allow this to become just another debate with absolutely nobody on either side who would actually do what Jesus commanded. This is the result of many debates. People on both sides feel good that they have done something, when they have done nothing.

God has said that we will receive what we ask from him, but Christians search all over the Bible for snippets of texts that they can distort and use against him, to spin out long lists of reasons why they will not receive. Then they call this orthodoxy and declare that it is all

"for the glory of God." But Jesus said that God is glorified when our prayers are answered – prayers for miracles: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." Are we making excuses for God, or for ourselves? God does not need our excuses, because he will indeed fulfill his word. But Jesus said that he will answer "whoever believes in me," and that is the problem. When someone does not believe but wishes to claim that he believes, he makes excuses. However, if the excuses are not true, then they are just lies. And these lies make up much of what Christians think about prayer.

James 4:3 is often taken out of context to explain unanswered prayer, but not only does this abuse hinder faith, it also ignores the point of the passage. James is speaking against people who are so in love with the world and so eager to satisfy their lusts that they would scheme, fight, oppress, and even commit murder to make it happen. Are there such people in the world? Of course! He makes a relevant point about a manifestation of the sinful human heart. It is a betrayal of the word of God to forget about the point of this whole passage in order to wrest one verse out of it and distort its meaning to explain failure in prayer. What is it that Christians wish to hide? Do they want to suppress the lesson in this text, so that it would not uncover their murderous lusts? If you would not cheat, steal, and kill to get what you want – if you would rather be without what you desire than to commit murder to obtain it – then verse 3 does not apply. The verse cannot be used to discuss prayer in general. If you wish to explain failure in prayer, then return to the true reason, the reason in the word of God that you detest – it is the lack of faith. This reason hurts people's religious pride even more than calling them murderers, and they hate it. This is why they prefer any other reason than this.

### 13. VICTOR AND SUBSTITUTE

Scripture teaches from beginning to end that Christ would become the Victor by first becoming the Substitute. God said this as early as Genesis 3:15. There are no "two views" of the atonement in this sense, only one view, because any view that denies either would not be the biblical atonement. The two aspects do not conflict with each other, unless men make them conflict with each other because they harbor prejudice against one of them. For Christ to become the Victor without first becoming the Substitute was the thing urged upon Christ by Peter and the carnal followers in the time of Christ, to which Christ responded, "Get behind me Satan! For you mind the things of men, and not the things of God."

To neglect either one would be blasphemy. Did Christ become a Substitute, then end up the Loser because of it? Or did Christ never become a Substitute, but only a Winner? The first would mean that Christ never succeeded, and the second would mean that Christ never redeemed anyone. Once the doctrine has been stated adequately, someone who rejects either aspect of this atonement should be subject to excommunication. This issue is no less significant than justification by faith. In fact, it comes prior to justification by faith, because the "faith" would have no proper object to believe unless the doctrine is settled. Both aspects of the atonement condemn those who claim to believe what the gospel says about Jesus, but in fact do not believe.

The Son of God never needed to become a Victor. He had been God in eternity and possessed absolute power with the Father. He did not need to prove anything or ascend anywhere. But the Father so loved the world that he sent his Son, so that by the Son's suffering and conquest he could put a MAN up there with him! Now there is a man, in the person of the God-man Messiah, at the right hand of God as our representative and guarantee. As Paul wrote, "There is one mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus." The one who teaches the Victor view of the atonement, does he believe that he -- the Christian -- has authority over all things that are under the throne of God? Does he believe that he has authority over demons, cancer, amputated limbs, viruses, etc. in the name of Jesus? Does he believe that the Christian wields authority over both the spiritual and material world, dominating things like poverty, infertile soil, hostile animals, and all such things? I have exercised authority over some of these things myself, and I have come across reports about others who have exercised authority over the other items. But if the person does not believe this, then he does not believe that Christ is the Victor, because the Victor that he claims to believe is a MAN. A God-man indeed, but a God-MAN. Jesus -- a man -- has total power in all three realms, and we have been authorized to use his name. Unless a person follows through with this exalted view of the atonement and takes charge over sickness and demons, and all things that oppose the program of God and inflict suffering over humanity, he does not believe in Christ the Victor. It is only another instance of false piety and religious posturing.

The same can be said about someone who teaches the Substitute view of the atonement. Does he believe that the blood of Christ destroyed the consciousness of sin? Most Evangelicals insist that Christians should maintain a constant consciousness of sin. This is supposed to exhibit humility and repentance. But according to the letter to the Hebrews,



this would make the blood of Christ no better than the blood of bulls and goats. Thus most Christians believe that Jesus is no better than a cow, or they do not believe he is their substitute. In addition, the same biblical texts that refer to Christ's bearing of our sins are used interchangeably by Scripture itself to refer to Christ's bearing of our sicknesses, and even the mere anticipation of this substitution produced tangible and miraculous effects in this life, as we see in Matthew 8. Does the person who teaches the Substitute view also acknowledge that we can be free from demons and diseases in this life by faith? Does he teach this, so that as he speaks demons cry out and flee, and those who listen are healed in their bodies? Are people saved from crippling depression and suicidal thoughts by what he teaches? Does he teach that Christ has endured the consequences of sin, so that we are saved from tragedies, accidents, plagues and wars, and all the things listed in texts like Deuteronomy 28 and Psalm 91? If not, then he does not believe in Christ the Substitute. It is also another instance of false piety and religious posturing. His doctrine is weaker than those who lived under Deuteronomy 28 and Psalm 91, those who merely anticipated the atonement.

It is laughable that some theologians have written hundreds of pages to argue for either view, or even for one view against the other, as if they have made some novel discovery that would revolutionize theology. Pathetic. And then none of them believes any of it. They do not receive the benefits of what little slice of the atonement that they carve out for everybody. If we combine both views of the atonement – which in fact cannot be combined, since there is only one atonement, and one view of the atonement, or no atonement at all – what power would be unleashed in the world! Church people have no power, because regardless of what they think about the atonement, they do not in fact believe in Jesus, neither what he suffered nor what he achieved. If we are so fond of flaunting our religious views, then let us at least believe them. Our studies on the atonement must lead us to receive the actual effects of what Christ has done, instead of to merely satisfy intellectual lust and religious pride, or to gather ammunition for debate.

## 14. TONGUES AND EDIFICATION

The Bible contradicts the assumption that the only kind of edification or the only way to edification is intelligible speech. The one who speaks in tongues edifies himself (1 Corinthians 14:4a) as his spirit prays (1 Corinthians 14:14a), but his mind is "unfruitful" (14:b). Therefore, Paul says that the Christian should both pray with tongues and with the understanding (14:15). We use intelligible speech, however, when we wish to edify other people. Of course, 1 Corinthians 14 places the emphasis on edifying other people, and that by intelligible speech, because it was what the Corinthians needed to hear. A different church might need to hear the other perspective. What would Paul say to the anti-tongues cults? There the edification of other people by intelligible speech is stressed to the exclusion of all else, even to the point of condemning what the Bible teaches as proper means of edification, as if these things are evil. To them Paul would likely place emphasis on the edification of the self through praying in tongues (14:18), or the edification of others by tongues and interpretation. It involves little speculation to say this because we only mean that Paul would adjust his emphasis to enforce his own principles on the matter when the error is focused elsewhere.

The intelligible speech that Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 14 is not even mainly preaching (although that is included in 14:26), but he refers to prophecy, a supernatural manifestation of the Spirit. Those who reject speaking in tongues usually also reject prophecy, and so they in effect throw out all of 1 Corinthians 14. They usually also reject gifts of healing, miracles, seeing and hearing spirits, visions and dreams, and revelations. Thus they also throw out 1 Corinthians 12 and 13. Such people follow Jesus Christ only as a moral philosopher, as some heathens follow Confucius. They refuse to allow the philosophy of heaven to produce what it promises on earth. They refuse to follow Jesus in his works of power, works that he commanded his apprentices to continue. When you claim to follow someone but rejects much of what this person teaches and stands for, then he is only a mere symbol to you. You are not a true follower.

Although intelligible speech indeed leads to edification, the assumption that only intelligible speech can produce edification is unbiblical. Nevertheless, it is an inflexible and non-negotiable assumption in some theological traditions that only intelligible speech can produce edification. This is because, as with hundreds of other topics, it is an inflexible and non-negotiable fact that the theological traditions are wrong. The traditions are often invented to protect human agenda, such as to justify their prejudices and obscure their inadequacies. If they lack the Spirit of God, then they want to teach that they already have the Spirit of God, that this is not something that God offers after our confession of faith in Christ, and that it is not something that would produce any external and powerful effects. If they have no faith to receive and to minister healing, they want to say that healing has ceased, and that sickness is a gift from God, not an oppression from Satan as Jesus said. If they have no tongues, no prophecies, no visions, no dreams, no...no anything other than claiming that they are the most intelligent and orthodox people in the history of mankind regardless of how much they contradict Scripture, then all these things have ceased.

Jesus was not killed because he performed too many charitable works. No, he was killed because he performed too many miraculous works. He was hated not because he exposed people's covetousness and selfishness, but because he exposed people's lack of faith and power. Jesus was not killed because he defied too many political ideologies. No, he was killed because he defied too many theological ideologies. He was hated because he defied historic orthodoxy to reinstate authentic orthodoxy. He was not killed because some people thought he blasphemed. Many blasphemed, and many heathens circulated among the people, but none threatened the establishment like he did. Jesus was killed because he exposed religious people for their unbelief and tradition, and for their lack of spiritual abilities and experiences. This made him a target for false accusations like blasphemy and sedition. From that time until our day, it is for the same reasons that those who consider themselves the religious elite oppose those who follow Jesus in his doctrines and miracles. If you make religionists look bad by your works of charity, they might dislike you but they will not attempt to destroy you. But if you make them look bad by your doctrines of faith and works of power, this is when the spirit of their forefathers -- the spirit of murder -- is awakened. This is when they will attempt to destroy you like their ancestors murdered Jesus. The ones who hate you will often be your own pastors, your church friends, your seminary professors, even your parents.

In any case, the exact nature and method of this edification might be complex, but it is easy to conceive of how something that bypasses the conscious mind can produce edification. You could easily see it. The reason you find it difficult is because you are stuck on the unbiblical assumption. Let us posit one way that it could happen. For a moment we will take up the conscious vs. subconscious model. It does not mean we accept the theories associated with it. This model came about because the non-Christians have inferred that something like this must exist in the human person, but they have not attained the truth about it. At any point in time, your subconscious is retaining, processing, and applying much more -- perhaps many million times more -- information than what your immediate consciousness is aware of and thinking about. The subconscious is necessary and powerful -- without it, you cannot remember anything beyond several minutes and you cannot perform the most basic motor functions -- but it is also inaccessible to your consciousness. You cannot exploit its resources at will. It could be that speaking in tongues is the miraculous ability given to the Christian to speak out of this part of the regenerated person, thus praying far beyond the development of the Christian's conscious mind. A Christian must continue to increase in knowledge and maturity in his consciousness, but meanwhile the Spirit enables him to make an instant leap forward.

There are testimonies of people who, by speaking in tongues daily, have been cured of irrational fear, crippling depression, traumatic memories, suicidal compulsions, and such things, as well as other less drastic problems. Students have acknowledged that by speaking in tongues daily and between study sessions, their minds have become more relaxed and focused, and more intelligent, thus increasing their performance. Christian speakers and writers have admitted that speaking in tongues have helped them overcome stagnation, and have infused them with creative energy and ideas. One person worked in a hospital where they housed children with mental disabilities. He did not know how to pray for them, but every day he would go visit each child and put his hands on them and pray for several

minutes in tongues. Children who had made no progress for three or more years would begin to show improvement within a week, and some were released after a month or so.

It is common to hear that praying in tongues helps people to subdue anger and fear, and extend forgiveness. Others regularly testify of being filled with joy, comfort, peace, seemingly superhuman courage, flashes of theological insights, for their own needs and to perform ministry. Tongues is God's gift to his children, never to be despised or underestimated. Sometimes people ask, "If I receive the Spirit, do I have to speak in tongues?" You don't have to do anything. You don't even have to receive Jesus Christ. You can burn in hell if you want. You don't HAVE TO speak in tongues, but you GET TO speak in tongues. Why wouldn't you want to, seeing that Scripture has nothing but praise for speaking in tongues when done in the right setting? As Paul said, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."

There are many other kinds of benefits. This is what we ought to expect, because it is a work of the Spirit of God. To call all of this "edification" is correct. The religionists who take pride in their edification could not come close to achieving a tenth of the results by their no-faith preaching and counseling, and their volumes upon volumes of tedious and nitpicking musings. If you begin with unbelief, you will always spin out faithless doctrines. And then you can only appeal to your creeds and other faithless theologians to excuse yourself. Do not get stuck on something that comes from only human orthodoxy and invention. Despise nothing that comes from God. Speaking in tongues comes from God, and even Balaam knew that you cannot curse what God has blessed. You cannot condemn what God has condoned. Thus anti-tongues preachers are apostate preachers, even less reliable than the apostate prophet Balaam. Abandon man-made assumptions that limit you and harm you. Open yourself to God, to the way of faith, so that you do not miss out on "every good and perfect gift."

## 15. THE CREATOR-CREATURE DISTINCTION

As for "Exclusive Psalmody," let me make an observation prompted by what I said there. We know some people belong to a theological tradition that stresses the creator-creature distinction. To them, this means that they must always assume the vast distance between God and man. We must remain God-centered in our interpretation of the scriptures and of all things, and somehow this also means that we must keep in mind our human finitude. I struggle to keep this together, because here is where they stop making sense, and it is falling apart in my hands. This is because, for example, these people who so emphasize a creator-creature distinction, and a God-centered interpretation, somehow impose a man-centered interpretation on all things, such as themselves, the world, the Scripture, and God himself. Can we understand God, or the Bible? Well, we must respect the creator-creature distinction, and since the creator is so great, and we are so finite, we cannot understand him. Wait...so our finitude wins? So our finitude is greater than his infinitude? This sounds awfully man-centered. If he is so great, he can make us understand. He is the deciding factor, we are not. Now that is God-centered.

That was just an example. I want to talk about the things I brought out from the Psalms. Consider all the promises and blessings from God that the writers of the Psalms applied to themselves. They recognized the creator-creature distinction. They often acknowledged their weakness, even desperation. The difference is that they did not allow this to determine what God would do in their lives. If they had done that, they would be man-centered like our worthless theologians. We are sinners. God is righteous. What happens? He forgives all our sins and makes us righteous. We are sick. God is a healer. What happens? He heals all our diseases and makes us healthy. We are alone and afraid. He is self-sufficient and all-powerful. What happens? He becomes our Father, our Shepherd, our Friend, and he makes us strong, full of joy and peace. The Psalms are full of this. In contrast, our historic and accepted orthodoxy centers on the man side of things, and interprets everything from this assumption, even overruling divine omnipotence and promises.

This applies to the whole Bible. I acknowledge the creator-creature distinction. As Jesus said, I cannot even make my hair black or white by worrying about it. And he said that without him I can do nothing, but nothing is impossible with God. So what happens? As a creature, I turn to the creator and become creator-centered in thinking about my possibilities. And now Jesus tells me, all things are possible to him who believes. And now Jesus tells me, if I remain in him and his words remain in me, I shall ask what I decide, and it will be given to me. And now Jesus tells me, if I have faith, I can even command a mountain to move into the sea, and it would obey me. And now Jesus tells me, if I believe him, I can do the same miracles that he did, and even greater miracles. What have I done? When I acknowledge the creator-creature distinction, and center on the creator, I see myself from his perspective, and I see my possibilities according to creator-abilities, not according to creature-limitations. The trash-grade theologians think that if you acknowledge the creator-creature distinction, then the conclusion must be one of weakness, but the opposite is true. As Paul said, when I am weak, THEN I AM STRONG!!!

So this is how you ought to read the Psalms, and the entire Bible. When we have faith in the creator -- when we are God-centered -- it means that we are no longer limited to what is possible to mere creatures, but we think of what is possible to the creator. Can you see how mainstream theology have utterly failed, and betrayed the gospel and all the people of God? They project creature finitude upon the entire relationship with the creator. They make man the deciding factor. Then understanding is difficult. Then miracles are impossible. Holiness is a struggle. And confidence is outright blasphemy. The word of God breaks us out of this insanity, this self-righteous and self-centered theology. We will stop imposing man's limits on every little thing, and stop rejecting what God himself has said about it. We know we are only creatures, and this is why we will not focus on our limitations, but focus on the creator, his abilities, and his promises. We will believe things bigger than ourselves. We will believe in miracles and blessings. We will be Christians.

They say, "Don't forget the creator-creature distinction! You are just a man. You are not God!" But I don't need to be God. Since HE is God, then as Jesus said, when I have faith in him I can command even a mountain to move from here to there, and he said, "Nothing will be impossible for you." They say, "Remember that you are finite! You are just a man. You cannot understand!" But I don't need to be infinite. Since HE is God, then as Jesus said, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide me into all truth. If one insists that because he is a man, and that he is finite, so that he cannot understand, and that he cannot perform extraordinary feats, the only reason would be because there is no creator -- no God at all -- on the other side of his religion. His faith is not a creator-creature relationship, but a creature-creature relationship, a relationship with himself. His theology is limited to what he can believe about himself, because -- and this is the secret -- his "God" is nothing other than himself. It is almost a form of solipsism, and his faith is only a projection. This explains the phony humility in man-made orthodoxy. There is no God on the other end of his faith. He cannot be God-centered because God is entirely absent in his life and in his doctrine. You can see that this overturns the standard thinking and takes us in the opposite direction. But you can also see that I am right.

## 16. THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT IN ETHICS

There is the common misunderstanding that legalism entails an overly strict adherence to the words of God's laws. This is false. The truth is that legalism takes words from God and twists them in a way that purports to obey those words, but in reality works around or against them to allow disobedience. Jesus said to the legalists, "You strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel." The point is not that we should swallow the gnat. He said, "These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." To the undiscerning, the legalists are able to maintain an appearance of faithfulness to God. This is because one feature of legalism is that it often stresses so intensely several details of a doctrine or even just man-made scruples related to that doctrine that it generates the impression of strict adherence, when it is only a smokescreen to cover up non-adherence.

Take the Sabbath for example. You must meet on Sunday! You must go to church! You must not work! Some even say you must not read the news or shop for groceries. Those who give up sports and various attainments on this day are hailed as heroes – for doing nothing. Since they themselves cannot do nothing all the time on that day, they make room for "works of necessity" that are permitted, and over the years people have asked for my help as they agonize over these works of necessity in fear and guilt as to whether it would be sinful to provide for their families due to the circumstances of their jobs. They are like members of this certain temple that I knew. They met on Saturdays, and they were not supposed to work on that day. They could not even drive home after the temple service. What to do? They hired the heathens to drive them! Why, these heathens were going to hell anyway, right? Why not pay them to dishonor this day that you claim to be so important to God? Wouldn't another group say that they should not speak to heathens and handle money on the Super Sacred Saturday Sabbath? Or is that another work of necessity? There is nothing necessary about it. Why not sleep in the temple? Go home on Sunday. This is the true face of legalism and religious hypocrisy. The church is full of this.

After all the fights and debates, and leaving or expelling those who disagree, they finally have their precious Sabbath, and many of the rules and contingencies have been voted on and written out. They had the foresight to invent cessationism to make God shut up, so he did not get to vote or to say anything about this. Even the Scripture has been silenced. Later they will patch the loopholes that they do not need, and create loopholes for things that they wish to do on Sunday. This is great! It feels so religious! God must be so grateful! However, when they gather, they refuse to do what God tells them they ought to do when they gather. They do what Satan tells them to do – they oppress, they persecute, they criticize, and they speak against God's promises and commands regarding healing the sick, casting out demons, prophecies, tongues, and the ministry of miracles. They strain out a gnat on defining what they are allowed or not allowed to do on Sunday, often not even according to the word of God but according to man-made scruples, but then they swallow the camel of unbelief, tradition, sickness, poverty, and all kinds of cruelty and hypocrisy on the Sabbath.

If it is a special day at all, it is supposed to be a day of healing and liberation, a day of miracles, but they have made it a day of oppression. Jesus clashed with the religious

legalists of his day on this issue. He said in one place, "And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." Oh, do you see it? If you reverse the truth, thinking that God demands sacrifice, ritual, regulation, pain and suffering, rather than faith and mercy, then you would condemn the innocent. And this is what happens on every Sunday. You would condemn the wrong people, when you ought to condemn yourself for your unbelief and hardness of heart. Legalism is a counterfeit spirituality fueled by the flesh. Anyone living by the flesh can walk into church on a designated day. It is as easy as meeting any business appointment, or even an appointment to commit adultery and murder. It is not a spiritual achievement. Am I against the Sabbath? Hey, look at that red herring! You are missing the point. I am talking about the gnat and the camel. God is seeking those who would worship him in spirit and in truth.

The people split churches. They go to war. They form cliques and denominations. They set up their own banners and names. They vote on creeds. They debate policies and regulations. All of this and much more to insist we must meet on Sunday. You must meet, and you must meet on that day. Fine. But when Sunday comes, they stand up and blaspheme the Holy Spirit. When Sunday comes and the people arrive, they refuse to heal the sick, to cast out demons, to prophesy, to speak in tongues, to allow revelations and spiritual songs, to operate in the gifts and powers of the Spirit for the benefit of all and to astound unbelievers. They refuse, but rather condemn these things, even though the word of God commands these things to occur when believers gather. Jesus, in the context of the Sabbath, had repeated confrontations with the religious hypocrites on healing the sick. He said that's what the Sabbath was for. He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." But the people hardened their hearts and decided to murder Jesus instead.

Walk into church and sit down on a Sunday? Even a Satanist can do that, and since the Christians do not believe in casting out demons, he is not even nervous. They fight for what even the unbelievers can do, but they fight against the things that only believers can do. They go through the same charade with baptism and communion. They start wars over things that are only rituals to them, never touching the reality and the power. They will have sacrifice, and not faith, mercy, and justice. They insist on meeting on a day, but refuse to meet for a miracle. They glorify the suffering of man, but not the healing from God. For this reason, many of them are weak, sick, and dead. Even if we pretend that they have all these things lined up right – the Sabbath, baptism, communion – they do not have Christ. And the whole thing becomes nothing more than a weekly book club for people with wet hair eating tiny snacks. Then when this clown show fails to dominate the culture, they blame the government.

Now that is legalism, and it is rampant in the churches. It permeates the creeds. It floods the seminaries. The religious elite reek of it. However, the charge of legalism is sometimes false, as when it is claimed that the "spirit" of what God said is contrary to the "letter" of what God said. In a discussion on ethics, if your opponent alleges that you focus on the letter of the law but disregard the spirit of the law, then what is the spirit of the law? Demand an explanation. If he can verbally explain the spirit of the law to you, then shouldn't that statement be the letter of the law in the first place? Why didn't God say it



that way? Why didn't God say what he meant? If the spirit of the law could legitimately contradict the letter of the law, this would mean that the letter of the law was never necessary to communicate the meaning. If we could change the letter of the law to match the spirit of the law, this would mean that the first version never expressed the spirit of the law in the first place. Could this second version of the letter contradict the spirit? If not, then it means that when the letter of the law is accurate, the spirit of the law would not contradict it. This requires your opponent to declare whether God has intelligently expressed himself in his words, or whether your opponent is more intelligent than God himself, so that he is able to ascertain God's true meaning, a meaning that God himself failed to convey or even stated in a way that contradicted his own intention. The other option is for your opponent to admit that he rejects Scripture. Then we can continue with this person as a non-Christian, and the issue becomes a difference in worldview rather than a single point in ethics or interpretation of a text.

On the other hand, if any attempt in the letter of the law can always be contradicted by the spirit of the law, then this means that the spirit of the law can never be expressed. This would mean that it is impossible for your opponent to know what the spirit of the law is through the letter. It would mean that there is no relationship between the two. Since this also means that he never understood the spirit of what you said, but only heard the letter of what you said, how could he say that you were wrong? Moreover, it would mean that what he said -- the letter of what he said -- and the spirit of what he said could be different and even contradictory. Therefore, when he said that you were wrong and that you were legalistic, the spirit of what he said could be that you were correct and that you were not legalistic. If you raise this point, and he answers that he meant what he said, it could mean that he did not mean what he said. Thus this "letter vs. spirit" move in argument, besides being cliché, also amounts to surrender. Everything he says becomes gibberish. He self-destructs and ejects himself from all debates.

Paul meant something different when he talked about the letter and the spirit, and the terms cannot be taken out and thrown around like this in order to subvert what a biblical text obviously says. He referred to the promised new covenant ministry of the spirit, in which God not only announces the letters of his commands, but also writes these commands in our hearts, empowering us to obey them. This ministry of the spirit infuses us with the power to follow the letter, not an excuse to overturn the letter. It is a ministry that changes hearts. In fact, a person who has benefited from such a ministry of the spirit would have the letters of God written on his heart, and he would not use the false dichotomy of "letter vs. spirit" to dismiss divine standards that he dislikes, since there would be nothing in the divine standards that he dislikes. He would love everything about God with a sincere and willing heart. The opponent's use of the "letter vs. spirit" excuse illustrates the way that the letter alone kills, so that he resists its condemnation in fear and resentment, but one who has the same letter written in his heart would not resist, because it has become his natural instinct, and he would love the letter of God's word. The letter alone condemns, since one cannot obey it, but just because it condemns does not mean that it is false. If it is false, it would have no power to condemn. The spirit is not something that contradicts the letter, but it infuses the heart to follow the letter. No one who has received such a ministry of the spirit would then challenge the letter, because this same letter is now his inherent nature.

We observe that the common misuse takes the words "letter" and "spirit" to mean something like "expression" and "intention," and we follow this in our discussion, but remember that Paul meant something else in the original context. There are, of course, many instances when you can expect your opponent to stick absolutely to the letter of the law. Perhaps your opponent claims that the condemnation of homosexuality in the "letter" of Scripture somehow endorses homosexuality in "spirit." You would be legalistic to follow the letter. Now what if you say that to love your neighbor can allow rape -- in the "spirit" of love? Would your opponent applaud this liberation from "legalism"? If it is because of "love" that you do it, who is your opponent to complain? If he claims that this is a warped idea of love, then your answer could be that this is only the "letter" of his answer, and that the "spirit" of his words is that he encourages rape. A woman screams, "No!" But according to your opponent that is perhaps only the letter of the protest, because the spirit says, "Yes." This is what your opponent teaches. Wait, is this the result he wanted all along by making the false distinction? To endorse his own evil designs? If he says that this is not what he means, it must mean that it is exactly what he means. Whatever your opponent permits others to violate, there are hundreds of things that he would not allow anyone to transgress, perhaps until he also wants to do those things. If words can mean their opposite, then there is no point in debating the meaning of certain words when we talk about ethical matters. It is futile for those who oppose biblical ethics to continue to appeal to the word of God, and attempt to make it endorse the opposite of what it clearly says. If you are not a Christian, just admit you are not a Christian, and start the discussion from there.

When Jesus brought out the "spirit" of the law in the Sermon on the Mount, he made every category he mentioned more strict and pervasive than the "letter" of tradition. For example, he says that even lust is counted as adultery and hate is counted as murder. This could be inferred from the Old Testament itself. Jesus was attacking religious teachings that circumvented the commandments. This is the spirit of the law, the intention of God's commands. Notice that it does not contradict the letter, but the pretense to stick with the letter allows men to get away with more. If the letter condemns murder, the spirit would never endorse murder, but it condemns even the mere desire to destroy someone. The spirit of the law against adultery condemns the desire to possess someone who does not belong to you. Likewise, the spirit of the law against homosexuality condemns even homosexual desires and thoughts, as Paul states in his letter to the Romans. And the spirit of the law in a broader sense would condemn all desires and thoughts contrary to God's definition of right and wrong.

Legalism is not too much obedience! It is a narrow and nitpicking assault on God's expression to subvert God's intention, in order to excuse disobedience, to grant greater liberty to sin. Thus when the religious experts read, "Love your neighbor as yourself," they added, "And hate your enemies." Then they wondered, "Who is my neighbor anyway?" This pretense to seek precision was so that they could dilute the command and allow themselves to love only a few people and even to hate all others. But Jesus answered, "Who was a neighbor to the one who needed help?" and then "Go and do likewise." The spirit of the law had intended that we ought to show benevolence to everyone, not just a "neighbor"

precisely defined by our narrowness of heart. He also portrayed the religiously and racially despised Samaritan as more in tune with God's commandment of love than the "lawfully ordained" religious tryhards.

Paul referred to the words of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." The point is that the ox should benefit from the work it performs. Legalism would pretend to seek precision in order to minimize the application of this command. They would ask, "What is a muzzle?" "Is it just any ox? What if it doesn't belong to me?" or "What counts as treading work?" and "So if it is not grain but something else, I can muzzle it." This is like those who confront a prohibition from God and say, "Let's make a distinction here. If it is done out of love, it is acceptable," forgetting that if we are to be precise about it, we also need to define love according to the same set of commandments. Or they might say, "But the desires are not sin." Paul made no such attempt to bully the ox, but he said, "Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly say this for our sake? It was written for our sake." Then he applied it to preachers, declaring that they ought to receive payment for their work. God considers handling his word – preaching sermons, writing books, counseling, broadcasting, etc. – as a job, an occupation that deserves payments and salaries just like any other job such as construction or bookkeeping. And James wrote that wages that are withheld cries out to God, so that judgment will fall upon those who defraud the workers. If God will avenge those who work for farms and factories, how much more will he avenge those who work for the gospel! This is the "spirit" or intention of the command. It demands a broad obedience, not a narrow and feigned obedience designed to indulge a broad defiance.

Another illustration. Moses said that when a man divorced a woman, he had to write her a certificate of divorce. Legalism construed this to mean that if a man would grant the certificate, then he could divorce for any reason, at any time, and as often as he wished. However, the "spirit" of the law was likely to protect the victims of divorce and to prohibit wife swapping, for otherwise the men could have expelled their unwanted spouses without any certificate to show the women's status. But in the hands of the legalists this command of mercy became a command of perversion. By making the command about the certificate alone, they could marry and remarry multiple times, even the same rosters of women, without technically committing adultery. The law was given to regulate the sin of divorce that men would have committed regardless of any prohibition because of their hardness of heart. It was not designed to offer a license for divorce. When it came to the legitimacy of divorce, Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." And he pretty much said that when divorce happens, everyone involved during or after it commits adultery. Divorce should never happen. Christians try to squirm out of this too. Just as the religious hypocrites attempted to nitpick their way out of the words of Moses, Christians have tried to nullify the words of Christ with their elite scholarship. For hundreds of years, over thousands of pages and sermons, they have tried it. You see it everywhere. The shame that they feel and the condemnation of their conscience often propel them to speak against Jesus more and more. Instead of confessing their sin, failure, and hardness of heart, they attempt to twist the word of God to justify themselves, to create more liberty for their transgressions. This is the spirit of legalism, the spirit that murdered Jesus, the word of God.

## 17. BOOTLICKING RELIGIOUS SELL-OUTS

Cessationists show their hypocrisy when they criticize the Pentecostals for accepting the biblical distinction between regeneration through Jesus Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are fanatics! They are uneducated! They do not know the Bible! They want strange experiences! However, because Lloyd-Jones had achieved hero status in their eyes, they often mix their disagreement with praises for him and offer all sorts of generous explanations. For example, Peter Masters of Spurgeon's church said that LJ succumbed to this biblical doctrine because he desperately desired revival. Well! Perhaps the Pentecostals also desire revival? Or perhaps some of the Pentecostals already have revival. They have more revival than a boring and dwindling church that has lost its legacy and has become nothing more than a tourist attraction. The Pentecostals believe the doctrine, and they are extreme fanatics, stupid anti-intellectuals. Lloyd-Jones believed something that resembled it, and he was a broken hero that deserves our sympathy. The truth is that they are respecters of persons. They are bootlicking religious sell-outs. Either LJ was correct, in which case the Pentecostals are even more correct, or he deserves the same scathing attack that they make against the Pentecostals.

Nevertheless, LJ did not get very close to the biblical doctrine. Compared to what the Bible teaches, he hardly started at all in preaching the word of God on this topic. And in terms of experience, and in practicing the word of God, being a doer of the word of God, he never started. He did not obey God. He never made it a regular practice to heal the sick and cast out demons, to prophesy and speak in tongues, among other things. This is a baseline that even many housewives and children have achieved. He merely acknowledged the starting line, but he never crossed it. This is even worse in a sense. If a person acknowledges a teaching but never becomes a doer of the word, he deceives himself. He will think that he has made progress, but he has never made any. He would harden himself even more, because he gives himself the illusion that he is doing what the word of God commands just by admitting what it says. Thus he hardens himself against the suggestion that he needs to begin. His admission of the doctrine becomes a testimony to his unbelief and disobedience. He knows the truth, but he does not do it.

Lloyd-Jones never arrived at the biblical doctrine. He appeared to think that regeneration has to do with salvation, then the baptism of the Spirit is a "sealing" that has to do with a greater commitment, an increased assurance and boldness, and then the gifts of the Spirit have to do with power. His presentation was so vague that it remains unclear if he thought that the BHS is needed for the gifts of the Spirit or if it invariably leads to the gifts of the Spirit. He would ramble on and on without arriving at a correct, definite, and final doctrine on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is not a mischaracterization. Don't try to hunt down one statement here or another there that seems to justify him. Take in the whole picture on what he said, and you will see that he was confused. Sometimes it is as if he thought that there are three things or three stages, instead of only two. This scheme is wrong. It is correct that the BHS is different from and subsequent to regeneration, or confessing faith in Christ. However, the BHS is not a "seal" for a greater commitment or an increased assurance and boldness in the faith.

Such a doctrine becomes a mere token to acknowledge the biblical distinction that there is a second experience, but it fails to acknowledge the necessary effect of this experience. The result is that one can supposedly acknowledge the biblical evidence for the BHS, receive the BHS, and still possess no supernatural power. Then for miracles to occur, the person would still need to wait for certain "gifts of the Spirit," even though he supposedly has the BHS. This allows for practically no change from the cessationist way of life. And this was Lloyd-Jones' way of life, although his doctrine appeared different from cessationism. His doctrine permitted himself to have it both ways – to disagree with the cessationist, but to live like the cessationist. The error is devastating, perhaps even more damaging than refusing to acknowledge the second experience. It creates a false safe zone for those who feel compelled by the biblical evidence, but refuse to commit to the theology and lifestyle of supernatural power demanded by this evidence. It makes the biblical evidence point to something else and thus neutralizes it. The Bible teaches that the BHS is an infusion of supernatural power from heaven. It is the doorway to supernatural powers and experiences. It is not a mere seal of salvation, an assurance that one ought to receive from the Spirit at conversion by faith in Christ; rather, it is an endowment of power by a different operation from the same Spirit.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is for power, and the power is not for sealing or assurance, but for visions, dreams, prophecies, tongues, healings, and miracles. Of course, this power could also increase assurance and boldness, and the abilities to perform whatever God has called a person to do, including administration, teaching, and the like. The workmen under Moses were given the Spirit to craft the tabernacle. It can enhance a person's intellectual abilities, to a superhuman degree. However, this power is first intended to result in supernatural abilities and effects, and it will not offer less than visions, tongues, prophecies, healings, and miracles. The manifestation of this power is sometimes the gifts of the Spirit, but the gifts represent only one of several ways that miracles can occur. For example, healing the sick and casting out demons can be performed by faith alone without any spiritual gifts. Or by faith, a Christian can make intercession for the sick and God can heal them directly. This can happen a thousand times without the gifts of the Spirit ever getting involved. The Bible almost never uses the "gift" terminology to refer to spiritual manifestations, answers to prayer, or miracles. Manifestations of supernatural power as a result of the BHS are often not manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit, but events that fall under other categories. Any debate about spiritual powers and miracles is skewed from the start if we begin by talking about the "gifts" of the Spirit.

It is counter-productive to argue about the beliefs of past heroes. So what if Spurgeon talked about the Spirit more than his peers? Did he speak in tongues, prophesy, and cast out demons in front of everybody? Did he do this at least several times every week, if not every day? Given the size of his audience, the challenge is unreasonably lenient. He could have laid hands on the sick hundreds of times on some weeks. If he did not do these things, then he did not do what Jesus commanded. He was not a doer of the word. So what if Calvin and Luther had a marginally better theology of the Spirit than many cessationists? It was better by so little that it was virtually worse. Calvin and Luther – after bashing the Catholics for their false miracles and mysticism, did they provide a biblical teaching on the supernatural life and then demonstrated this power in a public and consistent fashion? They

did not. When I read Lloyd-Jones on this topic I was glad that he had the courage to deviate from traditional orthodoxy – even that tiny bit would have invited persecution – but I was also puzzled by how weak and twisted his own version was. I saw it as a compromise that made zero progress, if not negative progress, due to the false safe zone it created. Were these religious heroes doers of the word? Did they obey what Scripture commands? Did they heal the sick and cast out demons? Did they encourage believers to prophesy and to speak in tongues? If not, then they disobeyed God and they deceived themselves.

It is foolish to emphasize the two or three times where someone acknowledged the biblical doctrine on miracles as if this settles the issue about his allegiance. What if he mentioned the deity of Christ only two or three times over the five thousand pages that he wrote? The Bible's teachings on the Spirit, faith, and miracles are no less prominent, and they came from this Christ that we call God, so that if we reject them, we also reject the one who taught them. If someone made vague mentions of the blood atonement only several times in his entire life, we would not hail him as a groundbreaking theological genius. We would call him a worthless and unfaithful minister. We would be suspicious of him, if not call him an outright heretic. Did he believe the atonement, if he mentioned it only on several occasions over a lifetime? We would suspect that either he did not, or he was wickedly unfaithful to it. But somehow he is entirely vindicated if he weakly hinted several times that God still worked miracles! It is not enough to have spurts of spiritual experiences, if they even had that. It is pathetic to cite two or three miracles that happened by accident – even the crumbs from God's table can heal the sick and cast out demons – over thirty, forty, sixty years, and then magnify these examples as if they vindicated someone's entire ministry, or as if they now justify someone's idolatrous admiration toward him. It is certainly not enough to convince the cessationists that revere the hero, or to distinguish this hero from the cessationists.

Jesus commanded much more of the supernatural from those who follow him, more than what he himself accomplished. He taught about faith and the supernatural in the most extreme manner. He stressed miraculous faith and power in his disciples with much more intensity, repetition, and variation than a number of doctrines that Christians have cherished as orthodox and essential, such as baptism and communion. In fact, compare how explicit, emphatic, and extreme were his teachings on miraculous faith and power demanded from all his disciples for all times, to his teachings on the atonement. Compare again with his teachings on predestination, on worship, on the church, on love and humility, on money and covetousness, well, on anything you choose. Jesus' teaching that all disciples for all times are obligated to have faith and power for miracles does not come behind any of these doctrines in prominence, sometimes exceeding several of them combined. If we add to this the narrative portions of the Gospels that are instructive for receiving and ministering miracles, then the doctrine becomes more extensive than all of the major doctrines combined. Yet in the creeds, it receives a blunt denial, and in the historic heroes, at best a rare token acknowledgment. And the church is still arguing about it. This is disgusting. The truth is that if I were to write only about this for the rest of my life, or even for fifty more lifetimes, I would come nowhere close to making up the centuries of shameful neglect, and no one could accuse me of imbalance or overemphasis.

The cessationist is a complete idiot and fraud, so he should not be our baseline of measurement. Having more faith than an atheist does not make you an apostle. Stop wasting your time sifting through thousands of pages to prove that your heroes believed some bare minimum standard that you imagined. The Bible tolerates no such minimum. Why should we care about the sliver of truth that they believed, when you have the full display before you in the Bible and in some of the other teachers? You have not vindicated your idols or their doctrine, but you have managed to make them look even more worthless and unfaithful by drawing attention to how weak their theology was on this topic, how little they said about it, and how little they obeyed God, if they ever obeyed God at all. You say, "No theologian is perfect. No one is infallible." But you do not say that nearly as often when you attack someone who disagrees with your favorite doctrine. In any case, the Satanist is also imperfect, and very fallible, but you still do not invite him to speak at your church. There is too much imperfection.

Sometimes a cessationist moron whines, "But...but not all cessationists are the same!" Is this a defense, or an admission that cessationism is rubbish? But is any cessationist a doer of the word of God? Does any cessationist preach that Christians can receive and minister miracles by faith, receive visions and dreams, speak in tongues, heal the sick, and cast out demons, and does he do these things regularly, expecting frequent and public results? If not, then all cessationists are the same. They refuse to believe God. They refuse to obey God. In the end it does not matter if non-Christians are atheists, or agnostics, or pantheists, Satanists or Buddhists, or this or that — if they are not Christians, God will throw all of them to hell just the same.

You can say that some Buddhists are better than other Buddhists, but they are still Buddhists. If some Buddhists are so much better that they are in fact Christians, then stop calling them Buddhists and call them Christians instead. You can say that not all atheists are the same. Some will indeed suffer more intense punishments in hell, but they will end up in the same place. Either you are a Christian, or you are not. Either you believe what Jesus said about faith and miracles, or you do not. And either you believe God's word, or you are a cessationist. If you are a better cessationist, whatever that means, you are still a cessationist. If someone is so much better than he is no longer a cessationist, then he should no longer be called a cessationist. As long as he is called a cessationist, he is in deep rebellion and wickedness. Either you are a doer of God's word to heal the sick and cast out demons, to speak in tongues and to prophesy, or you remain in unbelief and disobedience. You can be a hero of the faith only in the eyes of men. God will not admire someone who is ashamed of his promises and who disobeys his commands. What will happen to people who teach the opposite of what his word says, and who call his word heresy? Consider if God truly shares your admiration for your religious heroes. He might not be licking their boots like you are.

Jesus said, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." Unless someone believes the whole gospel — which is to say, the gospel, since it cannot really be divided into parts — and unless he believes all of the word of God, he does not believe enough of it. To claim that some cessationists are better or different

becomes a testimony that they knowingly refuse to believe much of what God says. Is this really better, or much worse? There is no improvement, but it is the same spirit of unbelief and disobedience. We can acknowledge the distinctions in their beliefs in a discussion that demands such nuance, but if even I know that you are stalling, and that you refuse to commit to the gospel, don't you think that God also knows? He knows, and he will judge you for it. Can you believe in the deity of Christ just a little? Either you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or you do not believe enough, and if you do not believe enough, you do not believe.

Suppose someone believes that God will send Jesus to die for him "if it is his will," and then never commits to Jesus. He has much faith that God will raise Jesus from the dead "if it is his will," and he will commit to this the moment it happens. He refuses to acknowledge that this has already happened and that the matter has been settled, but he insists that he has tremendous faith for salvation, so that God can do all this to save him "if it is his will." What would we say? He does not believe in Jesus, and he will burn in hell. He is not a flawed believer, but an unbeliever. He does not have strong faith, but zero faith, even anti-faith. Faith does not say, "Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down)," or "Who will descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." Faith does not say, "We need God to do this. We need God to do that." It does not say this about something that God has achieved and explained. What does faith say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the message of faith that we preach), because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." You do not need God to send Jesus "if it is his will." You can declare as boldly as you please, with all the self-righteousness and indignation that you can muster, that you have all the faith in the world for salvation, if God would only send Jesus to save you – if it is his will. This would not be faith, but insanity and unbelief. God already sent Jesus, and now you need to have the gospel in your heart and in your mouth. You believe. You confess. You say it. You do it.

What if Moses had said that God could give him the Ten Commandments "if it is his will" while reading the commandments to the congregation? What if Moses had so much "faith" that he shouted God could do absolutely anything, that he could even appear and write his words on stones "if it is his will" while holding the two tablets in his hands? Would that be faith, or insanity? This is how a cessationist appears when he claims to believe in miracles – he is a total flat-out moron. He is either the most oblivious man or the most dishonest man. He is making a joke out of the Spirit of God that has been poured out. Moses did not do this, because he was not stupid or wicked. He did not make a mockery of the word of God. Once God had given his commandments, Moses said to the people, "But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it."

Are you a better cessationist, if you believe that God can work a miracle "if it is his will"? You are like the man who said that God would tell him to stop his affair with his friend's wife "if it is his will." Oh, a much better adulterer! So much faith! God has explained his will, and performed his will. He has poured out the Spirit of power. He has declared his promises and commands about miracles. He has said and done all that is needed for us to move forward in faith. The cessationist refuses to admit that the matter has been settled,



but insists that he has faith, so that God can perform a miracle "if it is his will." What should we say about someone like this? He does not have strong faith, but zero faith, even anti-faith. "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." So what does faith say? "I will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. In his name, I will speak in tongues and cast out demons. By the Spirit of God, I will receive visions and dreams, and I will prophesy." You believe. You confess. You say it. You do it. This is the way of faith. Cessationist, you refuse to obey, but you think that if you throw the word of God back into "the will of God," then there is nothing you need to obey. The scam is clear to me. It must look so much more obvious and wicked to God. You do not believe, but you want to have it both ways, so that you could claim to believe. You are neither hot nor cold. You are disgusting! Jesus will spit you out!

Are you trying to excuse your heroes, or are you trying to excuse yourself? You are a failure even as an idolater. If you are determined to worship mere men, at least choose idols that have more faith. I will leave them no excuse, because if they were such good people, they would not want me to lie for them, or to make them look better than they were. If their teachings were faithful to the word of God, there would be ample records of them demanding Christians to heal the sick and cast out demons, to prophesy and to speak in tongues. If you cannot find multiple, explicit, consistent, and lengthy statements to this effect, then they did not believe the word of God. You should not need to search through thousands of pages to contrive evidence hinting that they believed in miracles or experienced them. The fact that you need to do this is evidence that they did not believe or obey God. You make them look even more pathetic when you make excuses for them. And if you keep making excuses for past heroes, you will discover that it becomes more difficult for you to exceed them. You will hinder your own progress. Accept the fact that they failed, that they were in deep unbelief, and that they refused to obey God. What is important is that we succeed, that we have faith, and that we obey God. I will not allow figures in the past to hold me back due to some irrational obligation to honor them, or even to lie for them. And I will leave myself no excuse, because I would rather look bad for a short time, than to deceive myself forever and fail to attain the fullness of the power of Christ.

## **18. "FAITH IS BETTER THAN UNBELIEF..."**

I would like to encourage you on your walk with God. And this is exactly that -- a walk with God, not with men. We walk with men only when they are also following after God. Thus do not allow man-made traditions and doctrines to use fear, guilt, and other things to pressure you to conform. The more someone compels you to follow tradition, the more he exposes himself as someone you should despise. If he has Christ, would he pressure you to follow Apollos?

As for church selection, once you have been established in some basic doctrines, it is better to attend an Arminian Pentecostal church than any Calvinist church I know. Calvinism -- I use the silly word for convenience when I speak to outsiders, those who are immature, unspiritual, and are obsessed with human tradition -- Any CHRISTIAN must tell you to decide, that you must use YOUR WILL to walk with God. The Bible spends much more time speaking on this level than on the eternal level. The so-called Calvinist only has a better explanation for why you do what you do. He often has a worse implementation when it comes to what you ought to do. One reason is that he uses God's sovereignty to excuse his own unbelief and disobedience, whereas the Arminian leaves himself no such excuse, and in fact neither does the Bible.

Do not avoid a church just because it does not understand the doctrines of election. You would assume that an Arminian church or a Pentecostal church would not understand election. But does any Calvinist church truly understand the doctrines of election? I have shown that historic orthodox Calvinism is a huge mess, and modern popular Calvinism can be even worse. Whether you go to a Calvinist church or an Arminian church, you will have to learn the true doctrines of divine sovereignty from outside of that church. So this cannot be a deciding factor in church selection.

But I would insist that you avoid a cessationist church. Avoid any church that teaches against the power of faith, and the spiritual and material blessings that God has given us by Jesus Christ. Don't even think about it. Just don't go there. Unbelief is poison. It sinks deep, wide, and lasts long. It is the worst thing to have in a person's system. Once you are established in the doctrines of divine sovereignty, no Arminian can talk you out of it. You are not in danger here. On the other hand, when the Bible says, "Choose you this day..." you must choose, whether you are Arminian or Calvinist, or something else. And this is the level where we live. God did not write the Bible for himself to read, but for you to read, and he speaks to us on the level of precepts, not eternal decrees.

He speaks to you about eternal decrees so that you can know the truth and understand him, but you live according to his teachings and commands. The Reformed/Calvinist disaster is that they honor God's decrees, at least formally in their doctrines, but then they refuse his commands. This is more evil than any doctrine of free will. Or, they use man-made traditions about his commands to intimidate people into following their way of life, and to overturn faith, mercy, and justice. This is what they do with the Sabbath, the Lord's Supper, water baptism, and all such things. Otherwise, if they really cared so much about God's decrees, God's commands, or the Sabbath, they would heal the sick and cast out demons

whenever they gather. If they really cared so much about the Lord's Supper, they would know that even under the inferior administration of Moses, the Passover enabled a whole nation -- every single person -- to walk out of slavery with forgiveness, healing, prosperity, and a constant stream of miracles (see Exodus 12:23, Exodus 12:35-36, Deuteronomy 8:4, Psalm 105:37, and many others). Their mystical doctrine of the "real" presence of Christ is an outright scam, but their unbelief and ritualism make Satan's oppression tangible. And if they really cared so much about water baptism, then their people should also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and they would encourage prophecy and speaking in tongues. So do not feel afraid or guilty to go where you should, where you are more free to obey the word of God.

Do not misunderstand -- I do not mean that Arminianism and Pentecostalism are better than Calvinism. Arminianism is certainly heresy. And Pentecostalism, to the point that it has become another human tradition, also cannot experience true demonstrations of God's power. On the other hand, I have never been satisfied with anyone's doctrine of divine sovereignty, who at the same time calls himself a Calvinist. Even Calvinism is too weak on Calvinism. Among us, we do not degrade ourselves by coming under some traditional "ism," although we sometimes speak in such terms because this way it is easier to communicate with religious enthusiasts.

So I do not mean that Calvinism is worse. It is better on some things, although never good enough on any one thing. Even Satanism, unlike Atheism, believes that there is a God. But is that good enough? Rather, I mean that faith is better than unbelief, and obedience is better than rebellion. And if you have this attitude, why would you be satisfied to reduce your faith to an "ism"? A church that teaches faith in all the doctrines of God and obedience to all the commands of God is ideal, and better than a church of any "ism." Teach God's sovereignty as the Bible teaches it. Teach man's choice as the Bible teaches it. Teach the Christian's power of faith as the Bible teaches it. Teach the experience of the Spirit as the Bible teaches it. What "ism" is this? It is the gospel. Anything less can imitate the gospel, but it is not the gospel.

Now after all this, if anyone is angry that I step on your "ism" -- the Calvinist is usually the one who gets angry -- then let me say this. If there is a church that teaches Calvinism like it is the only thing in the Bible, but if it heals the sick and casts out demons, so that cancers drop off on the floor and amputated limbs grow back in front of hundreds of people, GO THERE. Keep calling it Calvinism if you wish. However, if your Almighty Calvinism does not even allow the God who decrees all things for his glory to fulfill his own promises so that he would flood your church with miracles of healing and prophecy, then SHUT YOUR STUPID MOUTH. Your actual teaching is the sovereignty of Calvinism, not the sovereignty of God.

If your Calvinism shackles the Most High even more than Paganism, then it is certainly not the gospel. Shut up "for the glory of God." Some people are fond of saying that Calvinism is just "the gospel," and this could be true as far as it goes. (This assumes that we fix the many errors that I have pointed out about Calvinism, and still allow it to be called Calvinism. Otherwise, Calvinism is not really the same as the gospel, even if on

some issues it resembles the gospel more than other traditions. My version of "Calvinism" is indeed gospel, when I "speak as a fool" and allow it to be called this, but any other version of Calvinism, whether historic or modern, I do not believe amounts to the true gospel.) But even if Calvinism is the gospel as far as it goes, is this only as far as it goes, that God saves by grace and not by human will or effort? Calvinism is supposed to be a system that applies to all of life, so that when it goes wrong, it wrecks all of life, and it takes us further and further away from the gospel.

As for participation in the power of God, I agree that the ministry of healing is a good place to begin. Do not give up.

## **19. "THIS HESITATION TO PRAY FOR FINANCES..."**

This hesitation to pray for finances comes from the tradition of men and the voice of Satan. It is designed to rob you of your rights in Christ, to destroy your potential to be an example of God's goodness and generosity, to take away your ability to show practical love to family and others in need, and of course, to vastly reduce your effectiveness in spreading the word of God. You don't need to have any money to be in love with money. In fact, to have a fear of money is already the love of money, even the worship of money. Most of those who preach against receiving prosperity from God by faith are infatuated with money. Why are they so obsessed with poverty, with suffering, and with talking about how much money other people have? They are the ones obsessed with money, but they do not have the faith, or even a little respect for God, to receive it from him like children. They do not think of him as Father, but as a holy rock or statue that they worship.

Thoughts that contradict the promises of God come from the devil, but you can overcome them. Jesus said that when the word of God is sown into the heart, if it does not grow roots, the devil will come and steal it. He said that the deceitfulness of riches can choke the word of God. When a person overvalues the pursuit of wealth, or when a person regards wealth itself as God, he is deceived by wealth, and the word of God becomes unfruitful in his life. But the word of God also says that when we seek God first, then "all these things" that the pagans seek will be added to us as well. This is just as much the word of God as anything else in the Bible. What if someone contradicts this word of God because of his false piety and then congratulates himself for being free from the lure of wealth? Is he not even worse? Is he not even more deceived? Either he does not know the word of God he claims to believe, or he knows what it says and rejects it. In either case, he is ensnared by his own self-righteousness. Most Christians seem to think Jesus said that when we seek God "all these things" will be taken away from us as well. There is a demonic obsession in historic Christianity to condemn the idea that prosperity comes when we seek God and have faith. Satan has stolen the word of God from Christians by his deceitfulness. The devil comes with "Has God really said?" Our answer is to reaffirm that, yes, God has really said this and that. And then be a doer of the word.

The counterfeit gospel of pointless poverty and stupid suffering is popular because it makes people feel like they are special to God and very spiritual without demanding them to change anything, or to have faith for anything. Most of them are already in that place of failure. This message comes and says, "Your suffering is good for you. You are so humble for enduring this. This is the will of God. God does not help you not because you don't have faith, but because you have so much of it! He has something better for you. Forget what the Bible promises. If it promises anything good or comfortable, then it must mean something else. Don't let Satan trick you into thinking that God means what he says. God means the opposite." This is the most seeker-friendly message for most people, because it does not correct them or challenge them at all. It does not require any faith. It does not require any repentance for their unbelief. As I mentioned in The "Edge of Glory," the people of Israel suffered not because of obedience or because of persecution -- they never faced their enemies. Their suffering came from their natural environment aggravated by their own unbelief and rotten attitude. And then they sealed their own condemnation by

imposing a false explanation upon their suffering. On the basis of his name, his word, and his very nature, God had promised to deliver them from their hostile environment. More than that, he said that they would not only be delivered, but would even prosper greatly if they would move forward in faith and confront their enemies, and seize what belonged to them. They refused, but instead they formulated a theology that said God was the one who led them out there to suffer, that God was doing all of that to them. Yet God was the one who told them to leave that place of suffering. God was the one who promised them the land of milk and honey and commanded them to take it. God was the one who told them to move forward and enjoy life. But because they rejected him, God left them to die, and to live the life that they said he was making them live.

This is also the story of the church. In many places, and especially in areas of the world where high-minded "Christians" have the luxury to nitpick and argue about these things, almost 100% of their suffering comes from their natural environment, their everyday problems, and not persecution from people or from the government. Then they make this kind of suffering the basis of their relationship with God, and their theology about God. They are slaves in their minds like the people of Israel. That is, except for the one in a million who are like Caleb and Joshua. In the church, the people of unbelief have been the majority, and they are the ones who write church history from the human perspective. Thank God, in the Bible we have God's version of history about the people of Israel. Otherwise, the theology of the unbelief of Israel would have been the orthodox version, and Caleb and Joshua would have been the heretics. Then we would never know who were the true villains and who were the true heroes. Indeed, the people of Israel wanted to stone them when they spoke in faith about the promises of God. They treated faith like it was something dangerous, something heretical.

When we have disagreements in the church about the promises of God, this is what is happening. When we have disagreements about what the Bible says concerning healing, prosperity, divine favor and protection, miracles, visions, prophecies, the powers of faith and the powers of the Spirit, various supernatural experiences, and many other blessings, this is what is happening. Pay attention to the version of church history that you study. Does the writer tell the story of faith, or the story of unbelief? Does he turn a story of unnecessary suffering that resulted from unbelief and rebellion into a story of heroic piety due to the "will of God" -- like those people in Israel that God abandoned to die? Or does he understand history from the perspective of God's promises, so that he condemns unnecessary suffering as something foolish, wicked, and heretical? Does the theologian that you study teach that the wilderness people suffer is the "will of God" -- like the people of Israel that God hated and killed? Or does the theologian teach that the land of milk and honey is the will of God, only that we must move forward in faith and take the land? Men's version of history will justify themselves, and throw God's promises under the bus. But let God be true, and every man a liar. God's version of history will justify his own promises, and blame men's failure and suffering on their own unbelief and rebellion.

Well over 95% of what is considered orthodox Christian literature are written from the perspective of unbelief and rebellion. But because unbelief is in the majority, and the people approve one another, this fact is obscured by the people from themselves. Is that an

exaggeration? No, I am sure the estimate is too low and I am too lenient. Caleb and Joshua were the only two in their generation who survived, and they represented far less than 1% of the population. Do you say that the situation in the church is better? I hope you are right, but you can find out for yourself. Select from the best writings and creeds that represent Christian orthodoxy throughout history, and tell me how many of them without excuses or delays specifically declare faith in the gospel promises of milk and honey. My estimate of 95% unbelief is super low, isn't it? A man of faith has perhaps 99.99% of the orthodox believers against him, and the orthodox believers have 100% of unbelievers against them. So the orthodox believers think that they are heroes in the story, because they have 100% of unbelievers against them. But the truth is that they are the villains along with the unbelievers against the 0.01% who have true faith in God. Of course they would be offended by this. So we say to them: Then do you believe the things that we showed you, the things that Jesus said? You don't believe. Then how is all this our fault? Why are we the heretics? Just because there are more of you? So God is also a heretic. Is that why you have excommunicated him? Is that why there is no God in your church? Is that why there is no life in your soul?

The Israel under slavery had 400 years of history. Who was Moses to come and tell them something different? But Moses' theology and mission started all the way back from Joseph, and even from Abraham, who were told about the 400 years of slavery and then freedom. If Israel had the historic orthodoxy of slavery, then Moses had the prehistoric orthodoxy of grace, promised long ago to Abraham, and went as far back as Adam. It is even an eternal orthodoxy in the mind of God. From men's perspective, Moses was the heretic. They resisted him. From God's perspective, these stubborn and ungrateful brats had to listen and change, or they would die in their sins. And they all died. The Bible says that they were a congregation, they were circumcised, they were baptized, and they were eating and drinking from the rock which was Christ. This sounds orthodox, doesn't it? Haven't you fought hard to make this the standard by which you judge others? And then God gave them all up to destruction! Their dead bodies were all over the desert. They blamed everything on God's will? There! Let that be God's will then. God let their own theology wipe them out of existence. The church has adopted a theology of slavery, for hundreds of years. Even now, the dominant narrative is one of slavery. Even their so-called theology of grace is only token grace in the midst of slavery, only to transition to another phase of slavery. There is no fullness of freedom and power. There is no land of milk and honey. Of course, God always leaves himself a remnant, and so there has always been people like Joshua, and unspiritual men have always been suspicious of people of faith. For the church as a whole to move forward, these people of unbelief must DIE. Is this a harsh statement? But God did it to the people. People of unbelief must die. Perhaps a new generation will have faith in God. But as an individual, you can make progress right now.

Jesus would say something in public and then explain it more fully in private, because a wide public audience must be treated differently. I say much stronger things about faith, healing, the powers of the Spirit, the promises of God, and such things among my own people. There I am able to reduce polemics to a minimum and directly teach what the word of God says and how to apply it. However, with the wider public audience, many people who call themselves Christians still will not even start to believe what God said about these

things. They have not even reached the starting line. They are still debating the most elementary things about God. They are still fighting about whether his promises mean what they obviously say. And because they are debating, they think they are mature and thoughtful believers. The opposite is true. As Jesus said, "I have many other things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." He also said that we should not give pearls of wisdom to people who are like stupid pigs, because they will not listen to you, but they will turn to attack you. Thus if you fail to discern the audience, you make trouble for yourself for nobody's profit. Not everyone is like this, but I mean the public audience is very mixed. And so you must include a lot of tedious details and polemics that are unnecessary for those who have long taken for granted that the word of God is clear and true. I hope you can soon reach this point by yourself. We are not talking about some secret teachings and revelations, but things that are stated in the Bible for anyone to read. You have the same word of God. Do not let those who wish to argue with you hold you in place forever.



## **20. "THE EDGE OF GLORY HAS SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE..."**

"The Edge of Glory" has special significance. The chief importance is the message, but also note the importance of the method. The redemptive-historical approach claims to study God's revelation of Jesus Christ from all of Scripture. The principle sounds good, but I have not seen it done correctly. Theologians use it to limit what people are permitted to believe about God. Instead of reading the Bible as an unfolding of the plan of God and a revelation of Christ, in their hands this approach becomes a method to reduce God into what they wish to think about him. This betrays a fundamental estrangement from God and from Scripture, and from literacy. They teach the people: "Whatever the Bible says, it is really talking ONLY about this. Regardless of what it records and what it promises, it is never intended to say anything outside of this small circle I draw for you."

This is the opposite of what Scripture is intended to do, and the opposite of the effect of a redemptive-historical approach to Scripture. The Bible is God's revelation of his nature and his mind to us, and he is bigger than us in every way. Therefore, the Bible should expand what we believe about God, how God relates to us and the world, and how we should live by faith in Christ. Theologians use the redemptive-historical approach to Scripture to reduce a big Book into a small Jesus. Literacy is wasted on them. Literacy has become a weapon of Satan in their hands. Whether or not we call it the redemptive-historical approach, the proper reading of Scripture will begin with the knowledge that the Book is a revelation from God, and then listen to him teach us big knowledge about this God.

The standard redemptive-historical approach to Scripture usually permits the reader to believe less about Jesus Christ when he has finished the analysis, because no matter what the Bible says in a certain place, it is really not the point, since the point is only Jesus Christ. And the only Jesus permitted is the one we already believe before we read the text. It becomes a method to discard most of Scripture instead of a method to learn from Scripture and expand our knowledge and appreciation of God. This is grotesque. We do not need to read the whole Bible just to know that there is such a thing as Jesus Christ. We begin knowing that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and by reading the history of redemption, we learn more and more about him. By reading the Bible, we are supposed to learn his big thoughts about himself and about us, instead of reducing all the things that he says into our small thoughts about him and ourselves -- and then call that scholarship! This is a major difference between a theology of faith and a theology of unbelief.

The usual religious frauds reduce the Bible into what they can accept, but the Bible expands us and increases us. As demonstrated in The Edge of Glory, when it is used to address unbelief, the redemptive-historical approach to Scripture also represents God's polemics against his people, or those who claim to be his people. Stephen also gave an example of this in Acts 7. Most of those who extol the redemptive-historical approach to Scripture do not know that the method is in fact a testimony against them. They claim to preach Christ from every page. Which Christ? What does this page say about Christ? But they teach their own Christ, and disregard what each page says about Christ. If a page of Scripture talks about the Christ who heals in answer to faith, somehow it does not really teach this Christ that will heal in answer to faith, but it teaches only the Christ they allow, a Christ that has

nothing to do with healing in answer to faith. If a page of Scripture talks about the Christ who controls nature to help his people, somehow you can never expect this to happen to you, because it is not about you, and not even about what Christ does on that page, but again, only the Christ that they have already decided to permit apart from the text. If another page of Scripture talks about the Christ who baptizes his people with the Holy Spirit so that they would receive miraculous and prophetic powers, you are an uneducated self-centered fanatic if you think it means you can receive anything like what it promises, but it is still only about the much smaller Christ already written in stone by their tradition. Thus they crucify Jesus Christ afresh, and what appears reverent in principle has become one of the most satanic attacks against the word of God.

Suppose you are a Vincent Cheung otaku. You read everything he writes, and everything that anyone writes about him. You have been to "Veminary," where those who know nothing about Vincent Cheung try to teach you everything about him. You have a degree in Cheungology. Your conclusion is that everything said by him and everything said about him is summed up in this: Vincent Cheung likes cheesecake. Wait, doesn't everyone know this? But you know more. You smugly inform others that Vincent Cheung likes New York cheesecake and white chocolate raspberry cheesecake. Perhaps the only thing he likes more than cheesecake is his wife, because when his wife brings him those weak fluffy Japanese cheesecakes, he smiles and enjoys them anyway, because he is eating with her. So you are an expert in Vincent Cheung. But still, you want to know more.

After many back alley negotiations and shady dealings, you acquired an out-of-print copy of The Autobiography of Vincent Cheung. At last! The self-revelation of Vincent Cheung! The unfolding of the drama of the adventures of the Chinese preacher! You start reading, and soon come upon a chapter on Cheung's family background and early schooling. You think, "He started enjoying cheesecake even as a kid." Another chapter discusses his interest in spiritual things and in the supernatural. You say to yourself, "As I thought, by the time he was a teenager, his interest in cheesecake had reached a supernatural level." Then he talks about how he came to Christ, and perhaps, even his various visions and commission from God. And you shake your head: "So eventually the cheesecake started speaking to him." He explains the circumstances around a confrontation with a church that had departed from the word of God. You say, "He gets angry when someone makes a bad cheesecake." He explains how God supernaturally arranged his marriage. You exclaim, "He even had miracle cheesecake encounters!" He moved from one country to another. "He moved from a cheesecake to another cheesecake!"

The book excites you so much you share it with your best friend: "Read this. This fellow is even more obsessed with cheesecake than I thought. It's fantastic." After a week, you ask him, "Which chapter intrigued you the most?" He says, "Well, I suppose the chapter where he talks about the meteor hitting the earth and caused that tsunami that wiped out an entire continent." You become exasperated. You rebuke him and say: "Don't be so off-centered in your exegesis! Don't be so shallow! This is not about the meteor! This is not about the tsunami! This is not about the continent! This is not about you or me! Don't you get it? This is his AUTOBIOGRAPHY. It is ALL about him. Practice Cheung-centered exegesis. The meteor, the tsunami, the continent -- all of it was about how much he likes

cheesecake!" Your friend: "He does say he likes cheesecake in another chapter, but this chapter does not even mention himself or cheesecake. And if he has written this book to tell us about himself, can't he tell us whatever he wants about himself? Such as his thoughts about the meteor disaster?" You become violent and punch him in the face: "NO!" Your friend, crying now, "Why...?" You walk out and slam the door: "BECAUSE HE LIKES CHEESECAKE!!!"

If you are like this, do you even need to be literate? In fact, if you are like this, can we say that you respect Vincent Cheung? Can we say that you like him at all? He is just some cheesecake-obsessed symbol in your mind that might or might not have anything to do with reality. But this is how the theologians of so-called biblical theology, or the redemptive-historical approach, reduce Scripture into only what they permit. These people do not belong in churches and seminaries, but in insane asylums. If Vincent Cheung writes an autobiography or a story that is supposed to reveal himself on every page, then listen to what he tells you about himself on this page or that page, instead of reducing everything that he says into what you already decide to think about him. He might be an avid reader, a tennis player, a devoted husband, a lifelong preacher -- but you will only let him enjoy cheesecake. Now if you are stubborn about Vincent Cheung or any man, the damage is limited. But with God, this same stubbornness can make the difference between heaven and hell. If God has given us a Book that is supposed to reveal himself on every page, then listen to what he tells you about himself -- on each specific page. He might not be only that two or three things your worthless religious heritage allows you to believe.

## 21. WHEN "REAL FREEDOM" IS ABOUT AVOIDING THE QUESTION

When the Reformed/Calvinist is asked about human freedom...

Theologian: I want you to mow my lawn.

Teenager: How much money are you going to pay me?

Theologian: Listen, kid, real wealth is not about money, but it is about holiness, friendship, love, and such things.

Teenager: In other words, you are just trying to scam me by sounding pious, and to avoid the question and make it sound like it's my fault.

Teenager: You listen, old man. I did not ask you about "real wealth" or whatever you want to lecture me about. I asked you about money — dirty, filthy, cash money. How much of THAT are you going to pay me to mow your lawn? Don't change it to something else and think that I wouldn't notice. How much MONEY will you pay me?

Theologian: Oh, in that case, I will pay you nothing. I will pay you no money.

Teenager: There you go. Finally, a "real" answer from a religious cheat. Stop talking like a moron and answer people's question next time. That's why people have been walking away from useless garbage like you.

Theologian: Hey, you're rude. I'm telling your mother.

Teenager: Listen, you quack, "real" courtesy is about telling the truth, and this is something you needed to hear.

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From: "But What About the Thingamajig?"

Now consider something that we read from Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology. He writes, "It is said that the doctrine of perseverance is inconsistent with human freedom. But this objection proceeds on the false assumption that real freedom consists in the liberty of indifference, or the power of contrary choice in moral and spiritual matters. This is erroneous, however. True liberty consists exactly in self-determination in the direction of holiness. Man is never more free than when he moves consciously in the direction of God. And the Christian stands in that liberty through the grace of God."

Can you see that he appears to say something valuable, but avoids the objection? This is a typical Reformed way of thinking. I have chosen this example because it happens to be on my desk, but there are thousands like this in Reformed writings, and it would be easy to

find your own example and make your own analysis. In any case, Berkhof's answer is, "What you call X, I do not mean Y, but I mean Z." Fine, but what about Y? The objection is that X is inconsistent with Y, and Berkhof ignores this. And if the opponent claims that Y is essential, without which a system of theology cannot stand, then Berkhof's defense is a complete failure. The opponent says, "If God is sovereign, then man has no thingamajig." The Reformed answer is, "True freedom is self-determination." But the objection refers to thingamajig. Just as I tried to trick you into working for me without pay, the Reformed answer is a scam.

## **22. A DAMNABLE GOSPEL OF UNBELIEF**

The Bible teaches repentance, and if you refuse to teach repentance to a sinner, then his blood is on your hands even if he would not have repented because of your preaching. Regardless of what would have happened if you had obeyed God, your dereliction of duty in itself is a sufficient basis for God to blame you for the sinner's damnation. God himself explained this (Ezekiel 33:1-9). By the same principle, since the Bible teaches healing, if you refuse to teach healing to a sick person, then his death is on your hands even if he would not have believed or recovered. Your dereliction of duty in itself is a sufficient basis for God to blame you for the person's death. The Bible teaches healing as explicitly as the forgiveness of sins, placing it on the same foundation of the nature of God and the atonement of Christ, and on top of that adding the sovereignty of God and the ministries of Spirit that would heal even many unbelievers who would never convert.

Cessationists are mass murderers. The self-appointed heresy hunters and cult watchers who undermine the doctrine of healing are mass murderers. All the people who fail to teach the promise and reality of healing as the Bible teaches it, as strongly as the Bible teaches it, are mass murderers. This includes all cessationists, because they condemn what God teaches about healing, but it also includes most of those who call themselves charismatics, because they remain hesitant and slothful about the doctrine. This is a direct application of a biblical principle. It involves no speculation, because it is irrelevant whether any person would have received healing, since the sin is in failing to tell people about healing and to pray for their healing. We must not suppose that their crime is only formal or figurative. The deaths that they cause are as physical as any murder committed with a gun or a knife. And God will judge.

Anyone who has the responsibility and opportunity to teach about Jesus Christ, but who does not teach that people can receive healing from God by faith, is a mass murderer. Anyone who undermines the doctrine is a bloody religionist who exploits people's suffering to promote his theological bias. He is the worst kind of scum. How many thousands upon thousands upon thousands upon thousands have died because Christians refuse to teach the doctrine, and to teach it with complete certainty? Anyone who mentions abuse in order to discredit the doctrine condemns himself. The doctrine has been so undermined that it would take gargantuan effort to arrive at a point where widespread abuse would become a concern. For more than 1500 years, the abuse has been skepticism and opposition from those who claim to be Christians. If distortions have resulted in harm, then the solution is not to suppress the doctrine, but to advertise it even more, in order to spread a correct understanding. The self-righteous criticisms about those who teach biblical healing are only excuses to camouflage a damnable gospel of unbelief.

The Bible so clearly declares to you the doctrine of healing. You refuse to believe it, and you refuse to tell others about it. Then you persecute those who obey it. You have allowed people to remain in their pain. You have smiled with religious satisfaction as they agonized and perished. Like pagans without a revelation, you mutter "the will of God, the will of God," even when the word of God commands you to tell them about miracle healing from Jesus Christ. You have killed so many suffering people. You murdered them. The word of

God commands you to heal them by putting your hands on them and demanding healing to come in the name of Jesus. But you might as well have strangled them to death with those hands by your unbelief and false gospel. All this to defend your damnable religious heritage. All this so that you can feel like you have a superior theology, although it is a satanic systematic.

When God looks at you, he does not see the blood of Christ that cleanses from sin, but he sees the blood of the sick and suffering, the blood of the people that you have murdered. Their blood is all over your hands. All over your face. All over your Bibles! Then you lift up those same hands to worship God, and you tell him how you have defended your orthodoxy against the fanatics. "Oh Lord, look at these bloody hands. All those heretics who believed your promises and obeyed your commands, refusing to declare that they have expired, refusing to declare that you would break your covenant, and those that would have learned about your promises through them, I have killed with these hands. Ha! I killed them all, Lord! All those who taught the words of Jesus, those who followed his example of faith and compassion, and those who wanted to hear about him, I have slandered and destroyed. As my forefathers have done before me, I have murdered your people in your name." Keep it up, Reverend! You will soon get that Evangelical award!

\*Adapted from Vincent Cheung, "Cessationists as Mass Murderers"

## 23. VALUE THE THINGS OF GOD

Value speaking in tongues – all the things of God should be highly treasured. God himself designed this ability, and it is one way by which a believer can build up himself with spiritual power to preach the word, heal the sick, and cast out demons. As he prays in the spirit, God ministers to him psychological healing and resolution, creativity, and intellectual clarity and insight. He becomes better prepared to receive visions and dreams and prophecies, things that Joel and Peter said we ought to expect from the Holy Spirit.

As Paul said, those who consider themselves spiritual ought to agree with what he wrote in his letter to the Corinthians. Some people wish to think that Paul only installed restrictions in the operations of the powers of the Spirit, but he said many other things such as, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you," "I wish that all of you would speak in tongues," and "He who speaks in tongues builds up himself." Of course he exalts prophecy and other manifestations of the Spirit in that context, but he builds these things upon the assumption that speaking in tongues is excellent, beneficial, respectable, and powerful.

If some people do not think this way, it is because they are unbelieving and unspiritual. It is ironic that those who claim to be the most zealous in defending the faith are also some of the same people who are most zealous in encouraging suspicion and even derision against God. The entire body of Christ should see these people for what they really are — false scholars, false apologists, and counterfeit teachers who appease the itching ears of unbelief. They are driven by the spirit of the antichrist. It is undeniable that some of them have committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. God will never forgive them.

If a person seems zealous for some of God's word, and if by exploiting this appearance of faithfulness he manages to undermine other teachings in God's word, then he is an excellent servant of Satan. This describes most of the prominent teachers in the church, and the people love to have it this way. The most non-threatening and seeker-friendly message is a message of unbelief, tradition, sickness, poverty, defeat, and suffering. Most people are not itching to hear about faith and power, healing and prosperity, success and miracles, but they love a message of unbelief and suffering, because it validates their experience, without demanding any faith, any action, or any change from them.



## **24. FAITH AND DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY**

The Bible uses God's sovereignty to explain why some people cannot have faith in the gospel, and therefore cannot receive the promise of God (John 6:44, 65, 10:26, Romans 9:18). They are doomed. They will not be saved. The Bible never uses God's sovereignty to teach that some people could have faith in the promise — but because of the will of God — still cannot receive the promise. God withholds faith from the reprobates, but he never withholds faith to his chosen ones, and he never withholds his promise to those who have faith.

The promise is that we can receive healing for ourselves and command healing in others by faith, and faith itself comes under the sovereignty of God. But God denies faith only to the reprobates. Therefore, a person cannot claim to accept the Bible's teaching on healing, but at the same time excuse himself and claim that God does not give him faith for it. Since faith is under God sovereign control, his chosen ones are guaranteed the ability to have faith in all of his promises.

The fact that God is sovereign over faith itself destroys all excuses to reject the gospel promise of healing. In fact, we find that God often sovereignly infuses us with even more faith than we usually possess, to receive and to command even greater miracles than we thought we were able. Miracles come by faith, and the will of God denies faith only to reprobates. Therefore, the more someone claims that he does not receive the promise of God because of the will of God, the more he insists that he is reprobate, made for damnation, and reserved for everlasting torture in the fires of hell.

\*Adapted from Vincent Cheung, "The Screech of Satan"

## 25. TRUE ASSENT VS. FALSE ASSENT

The Bible does not sharply separate the mind and the heart, because both refer to the thinking, intangible part of the human being. However, there is a need to make a distinction between someone who appears to believe and someone who truly believes. Thus human tradition invented the distinction between assent (mind) vs. trust (heart). This is not the biblical distinction. But as God said, "These people come near to me with the lips, but their hearts are far from me." He made the distinction between the lips and the heart, not the mind and the heart. If a person believes at all, he believes with the spirit, or heart, or mind, but if a person does not believe, he can lie and say that he believes, and like the Pharisees did, even become a defender of the faith.

This is the condition of many of those who defend the faith today, including some who have internationally known ministries of apologetics. They vehemently defend what they claim to be an orthodox and historic faith, but in reality they hold to a bitter resentment toward what the word of God teaches. So they seek to destroy those who obey it. Their efforts serve to advance their own tradition and to smother out those who disagree, including those who are more correct.

Jesus asked, if one son says he would do what his father commands, but then does not do it, and if another son says that he would not do what his father commands, but then goes and does it, who does the will of the father? It is the second one, the one who does what his father commands. So if someone claims to defend the Lord, but then disobeys what this same Lord commands, such as to heal the sick and cast out demons, to prophesy and to perform miracles, does he really follow the Lord? He is an imposter and a deceiver.

James wrote that the person who is a hearer of the word of God but who is not a doer of the word of God is someone who deceives himself. The distinction is between true assent and false assent. If a person believes at all, if he truly assents, he does it with the heart, but a person can say anything he wants -- he can lie. He does not assent, or believe, but he lies and claims that he does. And James says that he can even lie to himself. The truth about him is revealed in whether or not he acts on what the word of God teaches and commands.

So many defend the faith, so many are proud of their stance on the inerrancy of Scripture, but they would not lift a finger to obey the Lord in something like healing the sick. Perhaps the Bible is wrong, and this is not something he should do? No, this person makes it his own calling to defend the Book as inerrant. Yet he refuses to obey. When you show him what the Bible says, he makes all kinds of complicated excuses. He defends the Lord or the Bible only as a matter of personal principle or ideology, but he rejects the Lord or the Bible when it comes to the substance, when it comes to what the word of God actually says. Thus he destroys his own escape, and he multiplies his condemnation.

## 26. HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT WORKS

People will pressure you to read too much of what they consider the historically significant works. I have studied many of them myself, and much of it has been a regret and a waste of time. I needed to become familiar with them in order to discuss them and to teach others, but I read too much to be worthwhile. People push you to study so much of these writings because of their false religious humility and their idolatry toward mere men. You do not have to accept this judgment just because it comes from me. Try it for yourself. Select whoever you wish that is supposed to be essential. They are not entirely useless if you have never read them before, but after you have become familiar with some basic concepts, what do you get from them but bad arguments, convoluted prose, and then a whole lot of unbelief, man-made inventions, and self-contradiction? The good things that they teach have been reproduced elsewhere, often with better clarity and precision, and without the unbelief. So why keep hitting your head against the wall for no benefit? Why hurt yourself to make yourself acceptable to others? Why make any effort to earn the respect of losers? This is not faith or humility, but insanity.

Sometimes there are indeed reasons to read the traditionally important works. For example, if you wish to become a theology professor, you will have to become familiar with them. If you need to pass a seminary test, then you will have to read them. If you have many conversations with Christians that talk about them, you might wish to gain some basic familiarity about them. Thus there might be practical reasons to read them as demanded by your circumstances. But spiritual reasons? If we are thinking about how to build faith and knowledge, how to grow in Christ, how to live a life worthy of the gospel, and how to make you a man of God who can preach and defend the faith – then, no, you do not need to study these writings. They are a drag on faith, and they waste your precious time – they waste your life. This is your life, so it is your choice. But I think that regarding the people who pressure or criticize you on this issue, it would be better to spit on them and cut them off from your life than to submit to their stupid advice. Just look at their lives! Are they the kind of believers that you want to become? Are they full of knowledge and power, doing the feats of faith that you want? Do they produce the kind of preaching and writing for the gospel that you wish to imitate? They do not, isn't that true? Then why listen to them? If you are reading them for school or work, then read them for school or work. If you are reading for faith and knowledge, then read things that build up faith and knowledge. It is irrelevant whether they are considered historically significant. Many historically significant works promote unbelief and misinformation.

People want you to conform to their standard of judgment, and to become failures like them. In their hearts, they know that they are failures, and they know that they defy God in their unbelief, and they know that they idolize mere men. When someone comes along that does things differently, it draws attention to their sins, and becomes a witness against them. It becomes a reminder that they are not in a good place with God. So they suppress the knowledge of God in unrighteousness. Of course they would want you to conform and become the same as they are. They don't want to help you. They want to silence you. They wish to say that the authors that they favor are relevant, and that someone like me is irrelevant. However, the most relevant materials are not those that have been respected by

the world of tradition, but what have been aligned to the word of God. When it comes to spiritual things, tradition cannot make anything relevant, but only God makes something relevant. It is not that I am irrelevant, but I am so relevant that I am a threat against them. They want to make me irrelevant, so that I will not disturb them in their unbelief and complacent religion. Just by intending to diverge from their unbelief, you have become too relevant for them and a threat to them. They are irrelevant to God, to Satan, and to the world. Their religion is nothing more than a book club that discusses various opinions about the Bible, and much of the time they do not even believe the Bible itself. There is no reality and no power. This is why they want to make you the same as they are, so that you will also become irrelevant, and no longer a threat and a witness against them.

## 27. ABUNDANT LIFE

Jesus said that he came to bring us abundant life. Satan came to steal, to kill, and to destroy, but Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. What does this abundant life produce? Consider what Satan steals, what Satan destroys. He alienates people from God, and from God's forgiveness and assurance. He corrupts people with evil in their hearts, with hatred, jealousy, and sadness. Jesus came to bring a life that reverses all of that. He caused us to be born again, and he made our hearts clean, holy, and righteous. He fills our hearts with love, contentment, worthy desires and ambitions, happiness, and strength. Satan corrupts the sinner's inner being such that his intelligence also deteriorates. He thinks that he is clever, but he is most stupid. Jesus has come to restore our intelligence. God has made Jesus our wisdom, and we have the mind of Christ. As we continue to remain in him, these things will grow in us more and more. He came to bring us life, and life in abundance.

However, Satan does not steal only people's wisdom and holiness. He does not work only in the realm of intellect and morality. He does not attack only the inner life. The destruction of righteousness in humanity also results in the destruction of health and long life, of prosperity and riches, of success and satisfaction in vocation, of relationships, and all the things that human life entails. It would be ludicrous to suppose that Jesus came to correct the root of the issue, but that all the effects of sin remain! It would be asinine to think that even though Jesus came to correct both the cause and the effect of human suffering, by some strange power the effect of righteousness are all suspended until after this life! This kind of theology is so foolish it is as if it was invented by someone who had never experienced the wisdom of salvation. It is as if his intelligence was never restored by God. It is reprobate theology.

Jesus said that a good tree will produce good fruit, and a bad tree will produce bad fruit. We would never say that the root of sin will produce the fruit of righteousness all through the present life, and it will produce the fruit of wickedness only after this life is over. Therefore, we must never say that the root of righteousness, the root of life, and the very root of God will produce the effects of wickedness all through the present life, and it will produce the effects of redemption only after this life is over. Theologians use the "already/not yet" distinction to excuse their reprobate theology. They claim that God has promised, but he has not yet delivered. However, the truth is that the blessings of redemption are already here, but they have not yet believed. They wish to say that we are waiting for God to deliver his promises, but the truth is that God is waiting for them to believe his promises.

The false and twisted way of thinking has been the assumption of theology throughout church history. It is often used to determine balance and orthodoxy. We must make two observations about this. First, Satan has been successful in deceiving the church, so that even if he cannot halt all the progress of the gospel, at least he could reduce its effectiveness and its resources in the world. Second, we must suspect the faith of those who think this way -- that is, those who claim to have the root of righteousness, but reject the effects of righteousness. It is their attempt to camouflage their unbelief and counterfeit piety, and those who have true faith are suppressed by those who have appointed themselves as

religious authorities and guardians. There is no reason to suffer unnecessary hardships. Why desire the approval of worthless men, and endure silly things from human garbage, rather than enjoy the approval of God, and all the blessings of faith? What would you do if a piece of garbage cries out from the trash can, "Get in here with me, or I will hate you"?

Jesus said that he came to bring us life in contrast to the fact that Satan was the one who would steal, kill, and destroy. And he stressed that he came to bring life in abundance. The life that comes from Jesus is far greater than the death that comes from Satan. Jesus gives more than Satan takes. As Paul wrote, "The gift is not like the trespass." Accept what Jesus said about himself, about what he came to do. He came to bring us a full life, and a lot of happiness. And he delivered. He did not lie, and he did not fail. We can experience this life more and more. Cast aside man-made doctrines that encourage weakness and suffering, and embrace this life and happiness completely, without reservation. Then bring his life to others.

In many parts of the world, there is very little suffering for Jesus. This is because the gospel has been such a success that even unbelievers remain generally peaceful. Where the gospel is preached, and where it is accepted by a significant number, the entire culture is transformed, so that even those who are proud of their resistance to it unknowingly adopt some of its ideals and morals. As Jesus said, the kingdom of God is like a little yeast that works its way through the whole dough. In such a society, suffering for Jesus is reduced, not because the Christians have compromised, but because they have refused to compromise and have achieved success. It is reprobate thinking to insist that the same level of suffering, sickness, and poverty must remain no matter what, as if the Christian life is the accumulation of all the effects of sin! Christians are not the guardians of the works of Satan, but we are the enforcers of the works of Christ. We receive and dispense the treasures that Jesus has won for his people. It would be treason to return to the cursed life, and preach about it as if it is gospel.

Piety is not found in suffering, but it is found in faith, in love, in worship, and in obedience. Where persecution is intense, maintaining faith and obedience might entail suffering. However, in a society that has been transformed by generations of faith and obedience, even flawed faith and obedience, continuing in faith and obedience will not entail the same level of suffering. Due to their wickedness and ignorance, there are many who associate true religion with suffering itself. In a society where the gospel has defined much of the culture, this false piety manifests itself in false doctrine, so that suffering is no longer an attack of the devil against the people of God, but God himself is the one who inflicts suffering against his own people. God is the one who commands his people to follow and to preach his word, and at the same time this same God would attack his own people with sickness, poverty, and all kinds of calamity, because this is supposed to be piety.

True Christians follow Jesus Christ, and if there is persecution, then they might suffer. Even then, when they walk in faith, they are often delivered by spectacular miracles. False Christians follow their own invention – the false god of Suffering – so that whether or not there is persecution, they suffer. This is the difference. The people who insist that the Christian life is a life of suffering are often the ones who cause the suffering. Thus in places

where the gospel has wielded much influence and the unbelievers are relatively peaceful, Christians receive more persecution than they should, because much of the persecution comes from those who claim to be Christians themselves. Of course, there are unbelievers who admit that they are unbelievers, but there are multitudes of unbelievers who claim that they are believers. Those who pretend to follow Jesus do not really believe what he said, but they claim to believe, and with so much pride and profit at stake in any religious debate, they attack those who truly believe the gospel, so that these imposters might establish themselves as the genuine followers of Christ.

The gospel has enjoyed a measure of success and influence in many parts of the world, and in many societies and cultures. This has drastically reduced suffering in both believers and unbelievers. It is religious insanity to manufacture suffering so we can simulate the experience of the early disciples of Christ. They suffered so much, in order that we would not have to suffer as much. It is a spiritual and psychological disorder to follow after Suffering when we ought to follow Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Christians still suffer in many parts of the world. Rather than insisting on more suffering for ourselves because we suffer so little, we should take advantage of our freedom to improve the world by the gospel, so that in our generation and in future generations, there would be less suffering for others. Standard orthodoxy commands us to seek suffering, to look for more of it, and to praise and worship it, as if suffering is God himself. This is cruel and wicked. It is satanic. We ought to attack suffering in the name of Jesus, and bring the peace of Christ to all nations. When heathens see us approach, they should not think that we are coming to multiply their problems, but that in the name of Jesus we bring them the solutions they need.

The Bible teaches that God forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases. And it commands us to preach the gospel and heal the sick. If there are no sick people in an area because they have been healed by God, and because they have remained in health by faith, we would not infect them with sickness or injure them with violence, and we would not brainwash them to welcome this sickness and violence, just so we would have sick people to heal. This would, again, be religious insanity. This would be like the grotesque religion of heathenism – and the standard orthodox gospel of sickness and poverty is essentially heathenism, akin to a voodoo religion. Rather, we would recognize their health as a testimony to the success of the gospel. We would encourage them to remain strong in the healing power of God, to remain free from suffering, and to bring this same blessing to other parts of the world.

Jesus Christ is too powerful for Satan. The devil has no chance against the gospel in a direct confrontation. The only way he can win is to convince people to think that the Christian faith in fact teaches something like the religion of heathenism, a religion of sacrifice and suffering. He has been so effective in doing this that this version of heathenism characterized much of Christian thought in church history, and has been codified in creeds, and recognized as historic orthodoxy. This is not biblical orthodoxy, not authentic orthodoxy. It is a false gospel, a voodoo religion in Christian vocabulary. Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of Satan. He did not come to partner with Satan to destroy us, and to make us suffer even more.

## 28. ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH

Jesus operated in a fundamentally different way than man-made doctrine would have us believe. Over and over again, when people approached him for healing, he said to them, "According to your faith be it unto you." He never said, "I am healing you because it is the will of God" or "I cannot heal you because it is not the will of God." This is the lie that the church has told to humanity throughout the centuries, but it has never been biblical doctrine. It is contrary to how Jesus operated, and how the apostles operated. The principle has never been, "If it is the will of God, then it will happen to you." Never. Jesus said, "If you believe it will happen to you, then it will happen to you."

This is the doctrine that Jesus established. And this is good news. The gospel teaches you to stop focusing on some unknown will of God, but to focus on what you believe based on what God has revealed. There is no need to guess the will of God as to what will happen to you. The Bible teaches us what God is like. It says that God forgives all our iniquities and heals all our diseases. What do you believe? We have the evidence of revelation to believe that he is good, that he forgives, that he heals, that he rescues and delivers, that he showers us with blessings and good things. When we believe this, then this is what will happen to us. This is the ministry of Jesus Christ. We do not need to wander through life worried and unsure.

There is good news for you. This world lives by the law of sin and death. Everything heads toward decay and corruption. But because of Jesus Christ, you do not need to live this way. You can live by another law, the law of spirit and life. By faith in God, you are in control. You can decide to receive from God. Satan cannot stop you. People cannot stop you. God will not stop you, because he is the one who established this. He is the one who teaches you the good news that is in Jesus. He teaches us to think about getting things from him not from his perspective of an eternal will. He does not demand a farmer or a housewife or an office worker to think like a philosophical theologian. It is enough for a person to earnestly hear what God said and believe it. Scholars can make the Christian faith all technical and convoluted, but they cannot escape the fact that it is impossible to please God without faith. God teaches us to think about getting things from him from the perspective of what we need, what we want, and what we believe. And by the gospel of Jesus Christ, he has given us a reliable basis to believe the right things about him.

Jesus came at a time when there were strict religious traditions and structures in society. The people who went to him in faith defied customs and bureaucracies in order to make contact with him, to obtain what they wanted. They did not need approval from the religious leaders and scholars to receive from God. They went straight to God and received. We would expect those who portray themselves as teachers about God to welcome our faith and desire to receive from God, but this is often not the case. Many of those who pressed toward Jesus were rebuked and hindered by the crowds who followed him. Why did the people follow him, if they were going to push away those who came to him? This is the insanity of religion without faith. It is good that such things are recorded, so we can see that the members of false orthodoxy have never repented and never improved, but when we have faith in Jesus, we do not need other people's agreement or permission. The teachers



of unbelief do not own Jesus, but Jesus had offered up himself to all those who would have faith in him. Jesus said, "I am the door" – he is the gate to the sheepfold. Jesus is the way. If you have faith, Jesus welcomes you. The self-appointed leaders and scholars cannot let you in, and they cannot keep you out.

This is good news for you. You are never limited by what other people think about God. You are never limited by what other people think you can receive from God. It does not matter if they present themselves as experts in religion. Evidently, they are not experts, because they say one thing, but Jesus says something else. They say one thing, but God does the opposite. So these people do not understand very much. Never submit to people like that. You are not asking them to answer you anyway. They are not the ones who has the power to grant your desire or to honor your faith. Know what you want, then have faith that God will give it to you. People are pressed down by religion. They are not pressed down by God, or by righteousness -- very often they do not even get the chance to know God and his true demands. No, they are pressed down by man-made teachings and traditions. They are suffering under the mere opinions of self-appointed leaders and scholars as to how things ought to be done, even on how God ought to behave. Throw off these people and stop caring what they say. We want the blessings of God. We want the life, the healing, and the prosperity that he guarantees to us by the gospel. We would be so much better off with the blessings of God than the compliments of men. So what if people speak well of us? It is not worth staying weak in spirit and sick in body. Conformity to human religion is not worth what we give up in exchange. Have faith in God. Have faith for good things, and what we believe will happen.