

The Elijah Challenge Training Manual

The Restoration of the Spirit and Power of Elijah
in the Last Days

THE ELIJAH CHALLENGE TRAINING MANUAL

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Why has the Church failed to complete the Great Commission?

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ commanded his followers to make disciples of all nations. Although Scripture does not make clear the criteria for measuring our progress in discipling all nations, it is obvious that we are still far from finishing the job. Anyone who travels extensively to countries in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and North Africa can find very little evidence that they have been discipled, let alone evangelized to any extent. Why have we been unable to obey the final command given by the Lord Jesus Christ before he ascended to heaven so very long ago? Here are some reasons:

- We are complacent and lacking in godliness.
- We have not concentrated on equipping believers to preach the gospel and make disciples, preferring instead to concentrate on maximizing God's blessings for ourselves on earth.
- We have a spirit of fear and doubt which has resulted in the lack of demonstrations of God's power to show the lost that our God is the only true God.

During these Last Days, the Lord is restoring the boldness, power, and practical holiness which have been lacking in the Church. If you want to experience this restoration, you must be willing to step out far from your comfort zone. Not all believers will step out of the boat and walk on water successfully. Not all will successfully obey the Lord's commands. But if you are determined to be restored in boldness and power for the work of evangelism and the Great Commission, it will happen for you.

You are about to study a paradigm, which although is likely very new for you, will be strongly supported by Scripture. It may require you to make uncomfortable adjustments your current paradigm. For some believers the adjustment is relatively easy, for others difficult and challenging. Some of you may eventually give up and put this teaching on the shelf to gather dust.

It will require considerable determination and perseverance on your part to obey the Lord's commands to "heal the sick, and tell them, 'the kingdom of God is near you'" (Luke 10:9). May the Lord grant you this determination and perseverance.

Before we learn how to obey these essential commands, we must first lay the proper foundation for the teaching. To do this we will in the next five chapters examine the state of the Church during these last days before the Second Coming of the Lord.

If you want to skip this material and go directly to the teaching on healing, go to page 31. However, we strongly encourage you to read these five important chapters at some point.

The Spirit of Elijah

Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes."

Malachi here prophesies that before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes, the spirit of Elijah will be sent to us. We need to know the significance of this.

What is the nature of the spirit that God gave to Elijah?

There are different facets of the spirit of Elijah. It may mean different things to different people. One very important aspect is the *message* that we will preach--- we will not shy away from preaching repentance from sin. We will deal with the nature of the *message* in a later chapter. Another aspect of the spirit of Elijah is the *approach* that Elijah used in preaching repentance to the Israelites. There were two facets to his approach.

During the time of Elijah, nearly the entire nation of Israel had backslidden and was worshipping the false god Baal. The Lord raised up Elijah to preach repentance to the Israelites and to turn them back to the One True God. However, they were stiff-necked and would not acknowledge the Lord as God. Even after suffering through three and a half years of drought and subsequent famine from God, still they would not repent. Finally, God decided to demonstrate His power to the Israelites in an undeniable fashion.

I Kings 18:20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Elijah challenged the Israelites to decide whether to follow the Lord or to follow Baal. This is essentially what we do when we share the gospel with the lost. We challenge them to either serve the world (or a false god like Baal) or to serve the Lord. How did the people respond to Elijah?

But the people said nothing.

The people were not willing to acknowledge the Lord as God. It is generally the same today when we share the gospel with the lost. They say nothing. What Elijah faced thousands of years ago in Israel is similar to the spiritual blindness we see in the world today.

Elijah then issued his challenge---a challenge with which every believer is familiar from reading the Old Testament. He told the worshippers of Baal to cut a bull into pieces as a sacrifice to their god, and to put the sacrifice on top of wood. Elijah told them not set fire to the sacrifices. Elijah would do the same for the Lord---he would

restore the Lord's altar and put sacrifices atop it. And he also would not set fire to them. Then Elijah challenged them.

I Kings 18:24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”

Believers who read this account cannot fail to be amazed by Elijah's extreme boldness before the assembled crowd of Israelites. We admire such boldness and zeal for the Lord. But few if any of us would even consider using such an approach for demonstrating to the lost or backslidden that our God is in fact the only true God. The reason for this hesitation is obvious. We harbor doubt that God would in fact perform the miracle before the eyes of the lost after we pray to Him. We fear that it may not be His will. One can say therefore that we have a *spirit of fear and doubt* regarding the use of a demonstration of power to confirm the truth of the gospel.

Some of us might not approve such an approach for theological reasons, for example, in accordance with dispensationalism (or cessationism) which holds that the age of miracles passed away along with the original apostles of Jesus. But what did the crowd of idolaters assembled on Mt. Carmel think of Elijah's challenge?

Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

Generally, the world likes this kind of approach. Some sinners may have heard enough preaching and persuasive words. They have not been moved. But if they see a visible demonstration of God's power, they may be open. There is some truth to the expression that a miracle is worth a thousand words. This is especially true when sharing the gospel with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and those who believe in witchcraft. When the Way is presented to them as a competing religion with words alone, they are not convinced. How can they be sure that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and that he has authority to forgive sin and save from condemnation in hell? Every religion has a theology of salvation or its equivalent. How can they know which one is the correct one? One possible way for them is through the use of miraculous signs which their religion is powerless to perform.

Elijah's challenge proceeded. The idolaters first stepped up and prayed to Baal. Their prayers were unanswered even after hours of fervent entreaties. Finally they gave up in exhaustion. After that the prophet Elijah stepped forward.

I Kings 18:36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

The spirit of Elijah is the spirit of *boldness and fearlessness*. Without question it requires extreme boldness to pray such a prayer in front of a crowd of idolaters.

Moreover, boldness in itself is not enough. One can be very bold just like Elijah, but if the demonstration of power fails to follow, one has succeeded at the very least in embarrassing oneself. We can even become a stumbling block to the lost by failing to back up our boldness with a visible demonstration of power.

I Kings 18:38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

Elijah's prayer was followed by very visible fire that came down from the sky before the eyes of the assembled idolaters. The spirit of Elijah therefore is also the spirit of tangible *power*---the kind that can be seen and experienced.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "*The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!*"

Only after the Israelites saw the visible demonstration of God's power did they finally acknowledge that the Lord is God. Before that day---even after being confronted with Elijah's prophesying and suffering from years of drought and famine---they stubbornly clung to Baal as their god.

The spirit of Elijah which the Lord is restoring today is both the spirit of *boldness* and also the spirit of *power*. The Lord desires to raise up a generation of mighty Elijah-like witnesses. Will you be one of them?

Elijahs will raise up Elishas after them

2 Kings 2:9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. 10 "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not."

Elijah had an attendant named Elisha who was determined to serve and glorify God in the glorious way that Elijah did.

...11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more.

As Elijah was being taken away, Elisha saw it and so fulfilled the condition set by Elijah for him to receive the double portion of his spirit.

2 Kings 2:14 Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?"

he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. ...15 The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha."

When the spirit of Elijah comes upon you, like Elijah you will raise up *Elishas* after you for end time evangelism. You will not hoard it for yourself and your ministry, but freely give it away for the sake of the Great Commission.

The Vision for The Elijah Challenge

The prophetic dream and the vision were given in 1999 and a year later in 2000 the ministry of The Elijah Challenge was born. It is based on what Elijah did on Mt. Carmel before the backslidden Israelites to demonstrate that the LORD is the true God. The Elijah Challenge has been using and teaching this same approach to prove to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, idol-worshippers, and practitioners of witchcraft that our Father is the only true God, and that Jesus is the only way to Him.

The Lord has been gracious and blessed the Elijah Challenge Training on the foreign mission field to enable His servants there to proclaim the kingdom of God effectively to the "Gentiles"---to predominantly non-Christian people groups. This remains a primary focus of The Elijah Challenge.

There is also a mission for The Elijah Challenge in the United States and the West where traditionally Christianity was the primary religion. It is clear to some that America and in particular Europe are no longer "Christian." If that is the case, then they have become mission fields.

Let's focus for the time being on America. How exactly has she become a mission field? Perhaps surprisingly, it is not only because of the influx of immigrants from Muslim, Hindus, and Buddhist countries. It is also because of what is happening in the Church itself.

Both Elijah & John the Baptist were sent to God's people

Scripture tells us that Elijah was not sent to the Gentiles, but to bring the Israelites back to the LORD. They had been deceived into believing that Baal was God, and not the LORD. What Elijah did at Mt. Carmel was to prove to the deceived Israelites that the LORD was the true God, and not Baal. Elijah was sent to bring the LORD's own people back to the true God.

When John the Baptist came hundreds of years later in the spirit and power of Elijah to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi, he also came to bring the people of Israel back to the LORD their God---to prepare them for the Coming of the Messiah. Like Elijah, John was not sent to the Gentiles, but to bring the Israelites---God's people--to repentance.

Even before John was conceived in his mother Elizabeth's womb, the angel of the Lord spoke about him to his father Zechariah:

Luke 1:16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

After John appeared, he fulfilled the words of the angel through his ministry.

Luke 3:7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him,
"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming
wrath? *8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.*

Like Elijah, John brought the message of repentance not to the Gentiles, but to God's people---a message of turning back to the Lord their God. Genuine repentance would involve the outward evidence of visible fruit in the lives of God's people. This visible fruit would involve obedience to God's commands and living righteous and holy lives.

And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. *9 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."*

The Pharisees and teachers of the law would justify themselves by claiming to be the physical descendants of Abraham whom God had chosen out of all the nations on earth. They were proud of being physical descendants of Abraham and as such thought that they were doing fine, thank you. But John rebuked them. It was not enough for them to be the descendants of Abraham; they also had to produce good fruit. If they did not produce good fruit, they would be cut down and thrown into the fire. That was the indisputable message of John the Baptist.

What does this mean for us?

Many believe that we are now in the days preceding the Second Coming of the Messiah. And Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah must be fulfilled a second time. The spirit and power of Elijah which was upon John the Baptist must be restored before the upcoming great and dreadful day of the LORD.

As it was in the time of Elijah, so it was in the time of John Baptist; and so shall it be in these days preceding the return of the LORD.

What does this mean?

In the days of Elijah, the people of God were called to repent from worshiping the wrong God. In the days of John the Baptist, the people of God were also called to repent in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. In these last days, God's people are likewise called to repent. The spirit of Elijah today would make ready a people prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

From what are we being called to repent? This answer to this is found in John's words to the fruitless and hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees when they came to him: "And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'"

"We have Jesus as our Savior"

Today as we consider the nearness of Christ's Second Coming, some Christians would say to themselves: "*We are Christians. We have Jesus as our Savior and our sins have been forgiven. We are saved by grace through faith alone---not by works. We have eternal life and are going to heaven. By God's grace we are doing absolutely fine, thank you.*"

What might John the Baptist say to us?

He might say: "For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up Christians. *The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.*"

John's rebuke to the Israelites was later backed up by the words of Jesus Christ Himself. Below are just a sample of what Jesus taught about the absolute necessity of not only hearing, but of obeying and bearing good fruit.

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Luke 11:28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Luke 8:15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Luke 8:21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

Luke 13:22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, 24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

26 "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

27 "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

Luke 8:18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. *6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.* 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Matthew 13:9 He who has ears, let him hear."

Finally, what does it mean when we pray the Lord's Prayer? We say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Obviously, it means at the very least that we are subjects of His kingdom here on earth. It means that we will do His will and obey His commands here on earth, just as it is in heaven. Subjects of a kingdom who do not submit to the commands of their king will be in trouble with their king. Likewise we must submit to the will and commands of our Father in heaven through His Son Jesus Christ who transferred into His kingdom through his death on the cross.

It is not our intention here to lay out in detail what happens to a believer who fails to obey the commands of the Lord. We will not add to controversy already swirling around the question of whether or not a believer can lose their salvation by disobedience or fruitlessness, or simply lose their heavenly reward---based on good service and works---while maintaining their hold on salvation. Whatever we choose to believe about this matter, we should "make every effort to enter through the narrow door" (Luke 13:24). Why should any disciple of Jesus Christ want to do anything less than that? We do not want to give guidelines to those who deliberately seek to do just the minimum in order to squeak by through the gates of heaven. God cannot be deceived by such a impure heart.

The message of John the Baptist to the people was one of repentance from sin leading to God's forgiveness. It was not the kind of message of peace and prosperity heard so often today which fills church pews with crowds wanting their ears tickled. John's message prepared the way for Jesus Christ and made straight paths for him in the hearts of those who came to hear him. Many contemporary messages make crooked the paths of the Lord in people's hearts by avoiding the unpopular message of sin and repentance and obedience. When the spirit of Elijah comes upon us, we will not sugarcoat the gospel to the lost but instead preach a

baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins---a repentance that results in the obedient bearing of much fruit.

Many "Christians" are not disciples of Christ

Jesus taught that if we bear much fruit, we show ourselves to be his disciples. We conclude that among those who call themselves "Christians" today are many who are not disciples of Jesus Christ. At some point they have repeated a "sinner's prayer" confessing their sins and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They were assured that their sins were forgiven and that they had eternal life. They were saved purely by grace because of their faith in Jesus and not by any dead works which they may have done in the past.

According to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, this is only part of the story---it is only the beginning. Genuine repentance in the sight of Jesus Christ must and will result in the visible fruit of obedience and fruitfulness. Being fruitful for Jesus Christ encompasses different areas. It includes bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit which includes becoming like Jesus Christ in His holiness and character. This would not be by the legalistic striving of our flesh, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bearing good fruit also includes being a witness of Jesus Christ to the world in obedience to the last command given by Him before His ascension to heaven almost two thousand years ago. In obedience to this command, the early disciples of the Lord continued the work that He began and extended the kingdom of Heaven on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is well documented in Acts. Present-day disciples of Jesus Christ are no less expected to obey the Lord's final command to disciple all nations.

Being like Jesus and doing what He did

Being fruitful, therefore, involves both becoming like Jesus in His holiness and also doing the works that He did when He was on earth. Christians today have for the most part failed on both counts. We are taught that "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven." But Paul the apostle teaches us: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope---the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ... (Titus 2:11-13). Moreover, Paul's fellow apostle Peter teaches us that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:3-4).

In the area of the miraculous, we are taught that we are essentially helpless and can do nothing, and that all we can do is to pray to God, trust Him, and wait on Him. But in Luke 10 Jesus commanded his disciples to "preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons." Later He commanded seventy more disciples---who were not apostles---to "heal the sick, and tell them, 'the kingdom of God is near you.'"

What Christians are taught today is only part truth and at variance with what Jesus Christ taught. The result is that we are not bearing good fruit as we should be, either in walking in holiness as Jesus did or in preaching the kingdom of heaven to the lost. Both John the Baptist and Jesus warned us that trees or branches lacking good fruit are thrown into the fire and burned. The inescapable conclusion is that many Christians today are not really saved at all.

I believe this is the primary reason---among other areas which shall be dealt with separately---why the spirit of Elijah is being restored during these days preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Through the spirit of Elijah we preach repentance to God's people to bring them back to the Lord their God, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The spirit of boldness and of manifest power

The spirit of Elijah is the spirit of holiness. But the spirit of Elijah is also the spirit of boldness and manifest power to bring God's people back to the Lord their God. At Mt. Carmel with Elijah, the Baal-worshiping Israelites fell prostrate and acknowledged that the Lord is God when they saw the fire fall from heaven. In the same way, God's people who are failing to bear good fruit because they have received a compromised gospel---and therefore a different Jesus---can repent when they see the fire of miraculous healing fall in their midst. Like the prophets of Baal challenged by Elijah at Mt. Carmel, today's false prophets will not be able to duplicate these miracles. When we preach repentance in the spirit of Elijah---with manifest healing power and with extreme boldness---God's people will come back to the Lord their God to make ready a people prepared for the Second Coming of Christ.

Thus the mission of The Elijah Challenge is two-fold: to equip the Church to fulfill the Great Commission among the lost Gentiles; and also to equip the Church to bring God's backslidden people back to Him to prepare them for the great and dreadful Day of the Lord.

End Time Messages for the Church from Revelation

Many followers of Christ believe that we are now in the end times. In the Book of Revelation Christ addresses seven churches. Whatever one's interpretation of the significance of these seven churches---whether they represent the Church at different times in history or different kinds of churches today---it is instructive to study the content of the messages Christ directed to them in Revelation. They must have bearing for the Church during these last days.

In these messages, there were some words of praise from the Lord, but also of rebuke. We will focus on the words of rebuke. The purpose for doing this will be made clear later in this chapter.

Note in the following messages that Christ places particular importance on our deeds. To five of the seven churches he says, "I know your deeds." Can we conclude that our deeds---whether good or bad---will have tremendous impact on our standing before the Lord when we go before Him?

To the Church in Ephesus

Revelation 2:2 *I know your deeds.* ...5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

To the Church in Smyrna

There was no rebuke from the Lord to this Church.

To the Church in Pergamum

Revelation 2:14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin *by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.* ...16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

First of all, we note that Balaam was the prophet who was hired to prophesy against the Israelites in return for a generous fee. Today there are such hirelings in the Church who will not minister unless guaranteed a certain generous honorarium. But let us go on.

If this warning against the teaching of Balaam is valid for the Church today, we should first note that there is currently no teaching which encourages or permits believers to engage in sexual immorality or the eating of food sacrificed to idols. However, according to Strong's Dictionary, the Greek word for "sexual immorality" (*porneuo*) may also mean the "practice of idolatry." There is in fact teaching in the Church today which encourages a form of idolatry.

The warning against eating food sacrificed to idols is enigmatic since this practice is not strictly forbidden elsewhere in Scripture. We are only encouraged not to eat such foods whenever it can cause another believer to stumble (1 Corinthians 8). Therefore the warning against eating food sacrificed to idols in this message may refer to the general practice of idolatry itself. If we are to apply this message to the Church today, Christ's warning against sexual immorality and against eating food sacrificed to idols may be simply a warning against idolatry. What kind of idolatry exists in the Church today?

Ephesians 5:5 ...No immoral, impure or *greedy person—such a man is an idolater*—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, ...evil desires and *greed, which is idolatry*.

Today there are some Christian ministers who teach "how to get rich." It is obvious that some people who attend their meetings will be those who want to get rich. But 1 Timothy 6:9 says:

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Could this extreme focus on material prosperity be the greed and idolatry for which Jesus is rebuking some in the Church during these last days?

The next church which the Lord addressed is rebuked in a similar way.

To the Church in Thyatira

Rev 2:19 *I know your deeds.* ...20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality [or idolatry] and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality [or again, of her idolatry], but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they *repent* of her ways. 23 ...*I will repay each of you according to your deeds.*

The teaching of Jezebel in its contemporary form appears to be a variation of Balaam's teaching on account of which Jesus severely rebuked the Church in Pergamum. Her teaching encourages some form of idolatry in the Church, likely related to greed and materialism.

To the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1 *I know your deeds...* 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for *I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.* 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

To the Church in Philadelphia

Rev 3:8 *I know your deeds..* 9 ... I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

To the Church in Laodicea

Rev 3:15 *I know your deeds...* 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Jesus said "repent" to five out of the seven churches of Revelation. He was not condemning them to judgment, but since he loved them he was rebuking and disciplining them. Mixed in with the rebuking were words of commendation to some of them for their good deeds. But only once, to the church in Philadelphia, did he say "I love you" on account of her faithfulness, endurance, and good deeds.

We are not saying that God does not love the Church. But to the Church in Laodicea---whom some believe may be the Church in the last days---the Lord uttered the following words:

Revelation 3:19 *"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.* 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Verse 20 above is often used as an evangelistic appeal to the lost, but clearly it is not. It is a definite *a call to the Church*. Do we hear His voice? Do we open the door for Him? If we do, it means we accept His rebuke and discipline. It means that we become earnest and we repent.

During these end times believers hear many comforting messages about God's love, grace, and blessing, but relatively few calling us to repentance from sin and

disobedience. We now understand that God's love *includes* rebuke and discipline which lead to repentance for believers. Rebuking is not "ministering condemnation"--the bugaboo which every evangelical minister bends backwards to avoid. Unfortunately because of a misunderstanding of God's love and grace, contemporary ministers usually want to preach pleasant messages which make people feel good and want to come back for more. But being rebuked and disciplined is not pleasant at all. However, it can be an expression of God's love as our father.

Hebrews 12:5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you... 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. ...11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

There are many messages about the Second Coming of Christ designed to comfort and assure us of our rich welcome into His Kingdom (2 Peter 1:10), but far fewer teachings about the *necessary conditions* we must fulfill in order to receive that welcome (2 Peter 1:3-9). When did we last hear a message in church warning us to flee from God's coming wrath (Luke 3:7)? Remembering that every teacher will stand before the Lord someday, we should correct this imbalance.

What will we preach when the spirit of Elijah comes?

We must now go beyond drinking "milk"---which includes the teaching about God's blessings for us in this life---and go on to take solid food which is for the mature. The Church must now cease being a spoiled child and grow up.

When the spirit of Elijah comes upon us, we will preach *repentance* to the people of God just as John the Baptist did before the first coming of the Messiah. Without repentance in the Church during these last days, the Great Commission cannot be fulfilled.

It may be instructive for us to reprint the message to the Church in Laodicea---possibly the Church in the end time---in its entirety here.

Revelation 3:5 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can

cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Christ's message to the lukewarm church he described scathingly as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" was clear: repent! If the Church of Laodicea represents the Church today, there is much soul-searching for us to do in view of the upcoming great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Today's preaching and teaching usually emphasize God's grace, love, and blessing for believers. Unfortunately, in our revulsion to the teaching of salvation by works prevalent in the time of Martin Luther, we have swung over to the opposite extreme and have minimized the importance of *deeds* and walking in holiness as the Holy Spirit empowers us. Unfortunately for the Church today, in his messages to the seven churches Christ said, over and over, "I know your deeds."

Let us remain *sober* about the Second Coming of Christ

Luke 21:34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, *and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*"

Before the Great Commission can be fulfilled, there must be *repentance* in the Church. The miraculous healings we will learn to perform in this Manual will be the sign that the Church must *repent* from lukewarmness, self-centeredness, materialism and her focus on the anxieties of life. This is a condition for being able to stand before the Son of Man on the Day of Judgment. An essential purpose of the spirit of Elijah during these last days is to prepare the Church for that great and dreadful day.

Instead, seek first his kingdom

Matthew 6:31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Obedience is not a Dirty Word

Today in America and around the world there are innumerable churches which have the word "Grace" in their names. This reflects the central tenet of Christianity that God's grace for the forgiveness of sins was made available freely through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I personally have pastored at two churches which had the word "Grace" in their names.

The concept of God's grace was propounded by the German theologian Martin Luther over half a millennium ago to combat the prevailing heresy of salvation by works. So oppressive and widespread was this heresy that Luther went to the opposite extreme in an attempt to correct the imbalance. He taught that man had no part in salvation except for his faith. But unfortunately Luther overcorrected and went too far---just as a motorist who is veering off the road can overcompensate in the opposite direction and end up out of control with disastrous consequences.

Luther would not allow for any effort at all on man's part in salvation aside from simply believing. His favorite epistle was Galatians in which the apostle Paul defended the doctrine of salvation by grace against those who wanted to include the works of the Law as well. However, Luther was not so well disposed toward the canonical epistle written by James. To Luther's dismay, James taught in his second chapter that "a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." He argued that faith without works is dead, and that true saving faith will result in good works in obedience to God's commands. (My professor at seminary told us that Luther even wanted to have the Epistle of James excluded from the Bible.)

The score: Luther 21,895 (and counting), James 0

Well, it appears that Luther, even over 500 years after his death, is still ahead by far. Today the Lutheran Church is alive and well, consisting of uncounted local congregations around the world (the figure of 21,895 congregations was just randomly chosen). There is no equivalent Jamesian denomination. While "Grace" may well be the most popular name for a church, there is likely not a single church called "Good Works Baptist Church" or "Obedience Community Church."

Because of this imbalance between grace through faith on the one hand and obedience to God's commands on the other, the Church as a whole today is generally weak, lukewarm and complacent. It is mostly ineffective on the front lines of missions and evangelism when engaging the giants of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and witchcraft. It has been unable to fulfill Christ's command to disciple all nations.

An extreme emphasis on God's grace teaches us what God wants to do for us. On the surface there would appear to be nothing wrong with this, except that the focus is usually always on God's desire to comfort, bless, and provide for His people on earth. Little time or attention is given to our unimaginably glorious inheritance in heaven and what we should do for God in response to such grace. This unbalanced

focus on earthly blessings keeps believers in the earthbound mindset of what-can-God-do-for-me-today.

The point is that God's grace, if properly taught, should lead us to good works in obedience to His commands. The imputed righteousness of God that we are freely given by grace through faith when we repent should eventually give birth to real and practical righteousness in our everyday lives. This means obedience in our thoughts and deeds. This should include a primary focus on accomplishing the great mandate He gave us 2,000 years ago. But we have fallen far short of His commands.

What did Paul---Luther's hero---teach?

The apostle Paul, who authored Galatians and understood grace better than any other author in the New Testament, also wrote:

1 Corinthians 15:10 ...No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Because of the grace of God that was with Paul, he worked very hard indeed for the kingdom of God. With regard to obedience to God's command to live a holy life, Paul wrote:

Romans 8:13 ...if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

1 Corinthians 9:27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Paul understood that by the grace of God he would be filled with the Holy Spirit through whom he would have power to put to death his flesh and thereby live a holy life. In this way he would not be disqualified by the prize. The man who understood grace more than anyone else understood the necessity of obedience and holy living. Imputed righteousness should be followed up by real and proper righteousness in the life of a believer.

Romans 6:16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

If we are properly taught obedience, then we gain the mindset of what-can-I-do-for-God to obey and please Him after I am saved. This leads to real and practical righteousness in the daily life of the disciple. There should be a healthy balance between the two mindsets. Unfortunately, today we emphasize God's grace exclusively and what He can do for us on earth because it pleases people and keeps them coming and tithing.

Why do we think that obedience is a dirty word?

Teaching about obedience, by contrast, is kept at arm's length because somehow it smacks of the heresy that Luther opposed. Moreover, people do not like to hear about obedience. It conjures up images of asceticism, self-denial, self-control, discipline, hard work, and authoritarianism. It's a hard sell in a country like America where we are all equal and where we are taught to pursue the American Dream. So it's much more fun to hear about receiving God's earthly blessings. People will flock to the gifted preacher who can make them feel good and laugh. But is the Kingdom of God really just a party?

Today there is talk about the Kingdom of God and what it means for believers as beloved and adored children of the King. This teaching may also have become unbalanced. If there is a kingdom, that means that there are also subjects of the Kingdom as well as servants and soldiers. *We* are those subjects and servants and soldiers who are to obey the commands of the King without reservation. When He commands us to go to war, we obey Him. When He commands us to preach the gospel to all creation and to make disciples of all nations, we obey Him. But because of unbalanced teaching about the Kingdom, many believers bear a closer resemblance to spoiled, overfed and unruly three-year-old princelings. Will such believers grow up strong on such a diet and be ready to reign with Jesus Christ? No.

Even Prince William (as well as his brother Prince Harry) of the United Kingdom, future heir to the British throne, served in the armed forces and learned discipline and to obey orders.

In Ephesians 1 the apostle Paul prayed: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..." If we can better grasp the extent of God's grace for us in our heavenly inheritance, we will stop behaving like helpless and undisciplined children and instead grow up in understanding, in power and authority, and in obedience to God's commands.

Pastors and teachers are highly accountable

We pastors and teachers want to encourage God's people. But it is easy to fall into the temptation of church growth at any cost as is the current fad in the Church. By no means is the size of a congregation a gauge of God's approval on that church. There could in fact be some inverse correlation between the two. I am convinced that some churches are large because their pastors have compromised the preaching and teaching of the word of God.

It is a fact that the market for sweetened beverages, pastries, desserts and other high-sugar content foods is far greater than the market for healthy vegetables. (For example, the Coca-Cola Company is No. 12 on *Fortune* magazine's 2009 ranking of

the "Top 50 Global Most Admired Companies.") Therefore we believe that more people will come to our church if we simply serve a steady diet of God's love and blessing and "grace." Of course we all want our church to grow. But at what cost? We are not called to tickle people's ears, but rather to disciple them and equip them for fruitful works of service for the kingdom of God. We should take care not to become hirelings motivated by the desire for a comfortable lifestyle and for status in the Christian community. Through Ezekiel God severely rebuked such false shepherds.

Ezekiel 34:1 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock...

7 "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, 9 therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

James 3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Do believers want solid teaching from Scripture?

Today there is an incipient awareness of sound nutrition, healthy diets and organic foods. We have learned that simply because something tastes good to us, it is not necessarily good for our health. Now there are people who have changed their eating habits, no longer desiring unhealthy foods. In the same way, believers can also train themselves to distinguish and to desire healthy spiritual food---solid teaching about practical righteousness. Let us get rid of our reservations about teaching obedience and living a righteous life. We are accountable to God for shepherding His flock through the correct dividing of His word.

Hebrews 5:13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with *the teaching about righteousness*. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have *trained themselves to distinguish* good from evil.

The constant diet of “grace” as is taught in most churches today has left believers sick and malnourished and unfit for battle. A balanced diet of grace *plus* obedience will result in committed soldiers trained and ready to fulfill the Great Commission.

Islam and Communism

It is significant that major players on the recent world stage were communism in the latter half of the twentieth century and more recently Islam at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Interestingly, Christianity taken to the extreme position of salvation by works might resemble the religion of Mohammed---the ultimate legalistic religion. But Christianity taken to the other extreme of “unlicensed grace” shares some temptingly similar characteristics with the bankrupt economic system known as communism: you receive the same pay whether you accomplish much or little. So why work so hard? Just take it easy. The state will take care of all your needs.

The teaching of communism is not far removed from the teaching which says that “God loves us all the same.” “God will never love you more than He loves you now, regardless of what you do.” Such an emphasis gives us license to do as little or as much as we would like for the Lord. It doesn’t matter what we do. God loves us all the same and is no respecter of persons. So why obey God and do good works for Him? Just take it easy. After all, you’re already guaranteed a free pass to heaven!

Could it be a mere coincidence that Karl Marx, credited as the founder of communism, was a German philosopher who grew up in a part of the world where Luther’s teachings had begun their widespread dissemination four centuries earlier?

We will not debate God’s love here. But it is clear that His immeasurable love for us should stir us to good works in obedience to His commands. And Jesus said:

Revelation 22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone *according to what he has done.*”

Jesus clearly said that our reward will be in accordance to what we have done and accomplished for Him. Yes, it is grace which enables us to serve Him and this grace is available to us. But we must apply it by walking in obedience to God and carrying out His commands. This grace is available to us because Jesus was obedient to death on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Luke 14:27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Disciples are also called to carry their cross and to obey God just as Jesus did. We see that obedience is not optional. If we have truly received the grace of God, we will obey His commands. This leads to eternal life.

John 12:50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

It is time to revisit Luther and to correct the imbalance wrought in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation for the past half millennium. We are in the last days and God is restoring both power and purity to His Church to fulfill the Great Commission.

Obedience is not a dirty word.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command." ...24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

How to have Confidence on the Day of Judgment

Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah *before that great and dreadful day* of the LORD comes.

Speaking to God's people the Israelites, the Old Testament prophet Malachi spoke of the day of their Messiah's Coming as *great and dreadful*. While what these words actually encompass might not be entirely clear to us, the term *dreadful* does not inspire comfort and confidence for God's people today on the eve of the Messiah's Second Coming. Certainly Malachi's description of the Day of the Lord applies to both his First Coming and even more especially, his Second Coming.

Jesus himself, teaching His disciples two thousand years ago, in part reinforced this sense of apprehension with regarding to His Second Coming.

Luke 21:25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 *When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*"

...31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ...34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and *that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*"

This will come upon every person on earth

These words are not only for Jewish disciples now living in Palestine, but for "all those who live on the face of the whole earth." In verse 28 above, Jesus encourages us with positive words of our redemption which will be drawing near with the appearance of certain signs. But then he counterbalances this a few verses later with the warning, "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and *that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*"

This admonition means that there is no guarantee that those who call themselves Christians will have an automatic free pass when He appears again to usher in His Kingdom. There is an element of uncertainty regarding what will happen to us when

we are told to be very watchful and to pray that we will be able to stand before Him at His glorious Coming.

Luke 13:22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, 24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

Jesus taught that many will try to enter through the narrow door which is Jesus Christ and will not be able to. This will obviously include those who call themselves "Christians" and profess to follow Him.

This matter should be of great concern to us who claim to be His disciples. How can we have confidence on the upcoming dreadful Day of Judgment? How can we be assured of our salvation? Let's see what Scripture teaches.

God is love

1 John 4:16 ...God is love. Whoever *lives in love* lives in God, and God in him.

We are taught to *live in love*. This can only mean to *live in love to God*, and to *live in love to one another*.

17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that *we will have confidence on the day of judgment*, because in this world we are like him.

If love is made complete among us, then in this world we are like God, and *we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment when Jesus Christ returns*. This brings up some pressing questions. Exactly how is love made complete among us? How many believers are actually like God in this world? Only when love is made complete among us can we have confidence on the Day of Judgment and can we be assured of our salvation. John then goes on to teach us:

18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

How are we made perfect in love?

We need not have fear regarding the upcoming Day of Judgment if we live in perfect love. How then can we be *made perfect in love*? John then teaches:

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

John teaches us about the two essential objects of love for believers: first, love for God and second, love for our brother. First, we are *made perfect in love* by loving God. If you do not love God, then you are not made perfect in love.

21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Second, we are also *made perfect in love* by loving our brother. If you do not love your brother whom you can see, you cannot love God whom you have not seen. If you do not love your brother, then you do not love God and you are not made perfect in love. Let's now go back to the matter of loving God.

What does it mean to love God?

Now exactly what does it mean in practice to love God? It does not simply entail the warm feelings that we experience in our hearts toward God when we worship Him in church. It is far more than that. In John's gospel, Jesus teaches us:

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Whoever does not obey the Lord's commands and his teaching does not love God. If you do not love God, then it follows that you are not *made perfect in love*. Therefore if you

- love your brother and
- obey the Lord's commands out of your love for Him,

then you are *made perfect in love* and *complete in love*, and you can have confidence on the day of judgment because in this world you are like Him.

Therefore the *only way* to have confidence on the Day of Judgment is to obey the Lord's commands. This includes loving one's brother.

"Fear God and keep his commandments"

Proverbs 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...*

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

If we learn to *fear God* and keep his commandments now, then we need not *fear His wrath* on the upcoming Day of Judgment. It is scriptural to fear God and to honor Him as holy and righteous. The fear of God helps us to avoid sin and temptation. King David knew God's love and grace in unusual measure. God's blessings upon his life, both spiritual and temporal, were unprecedented. But God's love and blessings were not enough to keep him from sinning against God so blatantly with the commission of adultery and murder. It was David's son Solomon who witnessed the tragic generational consequences of his father's sin. Perhaps it was that which may have led Solomon, the putative author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, to teach us *the importance of fearing God.*

It is not enough simply to say a sinner's prayer and then to sit in church every Sunday in order to be saved from God's wrath. Repentance must be proven by the bearing of good fruit for the Lord and His Kingdom.

Luke 13:1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! *But unless you **repent**, you too will all perish.* 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no! *But unless you **repent**, you too will all perish."*

Now what will true repentance entail? Read what Jesus taught in the very next verse.

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went *to look for fruit* on it, but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming *to look for fruit* on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

8 "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 *If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down."*

The Lord is patient with us, but His patience is not without limit. We are forewarned not to take advantage of His grace and love. If we have not been fruitful for the Lord here on earth, then *there is reason for fear on the Day of Judgment.*

Be careful of entrusting your salvation to others

Since this is the case, each of us ought to study God's word carefully to learn exactly what He commands us to do as presumed heirs of His Kingdom. We should be very careful of entrusting this most important matter of our salvation to others. On the Day of Judgment when we stand before the Lord, can we account for our lack of obedience to His commands by referring to what others taught us? If our teachers do not give us the full counsel of God but instead tickle our itching ears, they will be judged strictly (James 3:1). But should we think that we will not be held accountable for being fruitless? We all have access to God's Holy Word.

Unfortunately in many churches today, the emphasis is on what to do in order to secure God's blessings and comfort and "success" in this life. This teaching sells and brings the crowds. But Scripture warns us to beware of the many false prophets and false teachings which are proliferating in the end times. There is relatively very little teaching on what we must do in order to stand before the Son of Man on the great and dreadful day of His Coming. In light of eternity, this is far more important than God's temporal blessings in this life on earth.

Malachi 4:5 "Lo, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet, Before the coming of the day of Jehovah, **The great and the fearful.**" (Young's Literal Translation)

Jesus Christ used the approach of Elijah

On Mt. Carmel Elijah used a powerful miraculous sign to demonstrate to the Israelites that the Lord was the only true God. In the same way, Jesus Christ used miracles to demonstrate that He was in fact the promised Messiah and the only Savior.

John 20:30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

We know that Jesus performed many miracles when he appeared on earth two thousand years ago. It is arguable that most of these were miraculous healings. Why did Jesus heal so many infirm people? Was it simply because he had compassion on those who suffered in this way?

31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Scripture says that the miracles he performed were recorded so that sinners would believe on him as the Christ. We may conclude that the primary purpose for which Jesus performed miracles and healed the sick was to identify himself to the lost as the Son of God who could give eternal life. Just as Elijah used a powerful miracle to demonstrate that the Lord was God, Jesus healed the sick to demonstrate that he in fact was equal to God and had authority to save from sin. The approach of Elijah was valid in the ministry of Jesus and continues to be valid even today in accordance with John 14:12.

Jesus healed the sick to prove that He was the Jewish Messiah

Luke 7:20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you *the one who was to come*, or should we expect someone else?'"

John the Baptist sent men to ask Jesus whether or not he was the promised Messiah.

21 *At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.* 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: *The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*

According to Jesus himself, the great miraculous healings he performed were the outward evidence that he was indeed the Messiah whose coming was prophesied in the Old Testament.

John 10:37 *Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.* 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, *believe the miracles*, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

John 10:25 Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. *The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me*, 26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

Although the miracles Jesus performed verified his identity as the Son of God, there were still those who did not believe in him. Miracles performed in the name of Jesus Christ do not guarantee that sinners will repent and follow him. Some are not his sheep; their names are not written in the Book of Life. Even though they may witness great miracles, they will still not believe. It is ultimately the Holy Spirit who draws sinners to faith in Jesus Christ.

"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!"

These words spoken by Jesus would lead us to think that the Lord is not pleased to perform miraculous signs when so asked. But let us examine the context of his words.

Matthew 12:22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

After Jesus performed the powerful miracle of healing a man who was blind and mute, the people began to wonder if he might be the Son of David---the long-awaited Messiah. This was of course the very purpose for which Jesus performed his miracles---to draw the Jews to him as the Messiah. But the miracle was not at all effective in convincing the Pharisees.

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

These Pharisees were sons of the devil (John 8:44), and it is possible that their names were not in the Book of Life. Therefore they could not be convinced by anything---including miraculous signs---to accept him as their Messiah. They attributed the miracle to the prince of demons. Some verses later in the same chapter, they approach Jesus.

...38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."

Not long after they accused Jesus of using the power of the prince of demons to perform a miraculous healing, they ask him to perform a miraculous sign. Not surprisingly, Jesus rebuked them for their hypocrisy and pointedly refused to perform a miracle for them. He knew that still another miracle would not convince them of his Messiahship. They were sons of the devil.

39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

A similar incident is recorded in Mark 8:6-12 where Jesus performed the great miraculous sign of multiplying bread and fish to feed four thousand men. Then the Pharisees came to him to question and test him, asking for a sign from heaven. As he did with the Pharisees who accused him of using the power of darkness to heal the blind and mute man above, he likewise refused their request as well. We conclude that Jesus readily performed miracles for those whose hearts were open and sincere. But his treatment of Pharisees and hypocrites and those whose hearts were hardened stood in stark contrast.

"...Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

At first glance, Jesus' words above would lead us to conclude that it is more blessed or pleasing to God for us not to have seen a miracle than to have seen one before believing on him. But let us first examine the context of the verse.

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*"

First of all, let us look at the understood object of the verb "seen" in the phrase, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." The proper antecedent is found in the clause that immediately precedes it, which is "Because you have seen me, you have believed." Thomas believed because he had seen the risen Christ with his own eyes. It is thus clear what Jesus meant. He meant to say that blessed are those who have not seen "*me*"---risen from the dead in resurrection form---and yet have believed. Jesus was not referring to those who had seen his miraculous healings and then chosen to believe on him as the Messiah.

The next two verses disprove the notion that it is somehow not as pleasing to God when a sinner accepts Jesus as the Christ only after experiencing a miracle from him or reading about the miraculous signs that he performed.

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The Three Offices of the Church

Jesus Christ appeared two thousand years ago as priest, prophet, and king. After his death and resurrection he returned to his Father in heaven, leaving the Church to complete the Great Commission. As Christ had three offices, so the body of Christ on earth has been given three offices.

The priestly office

The primary work of an Old Testament priest is to minister to God on behalf of sinful man by offering sacrifices to Him. Christ fulfilled this by offering himself as a blood sacrifice to God to atone for man's sins. In a similar way, New Testament believers minister to God as priests by offering sacrifices to Him. First of all, they offer their bodies to Him as living sacrifices. They offer up to Him praise, worship, and adoration in various ways. They offer up to Him prayer in various forms--- thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession. These are all activities of our office as priests before God. Since He is so worthy, the priestly office is a very important part of the life of a believer. When believers gather together for worship services, they will often begin by offering up to God priestly offerings of praise and worship. The direction, so to speak, of the priestly office and of priestly activities is "up" to God in heaven above.

The prophetic office

The primary function of a prophet is to prophesy to believers for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort as disciples of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 14:3). Although they will on occasion speak forth God's word to the world, they primarily minister to the body of Christ to build her up. The direction of the prophetic office and prophetic activities is not "up" as it is for the priestly office, but "horizontal" to minister to other believers on earth. When we teach and instruct believers in the word of God, one can say that we are ministering in the prophetic office.

The kingly office

The third and final office in which we are called to function is the least understood office of the three. At present, while the Church functions effectively to some degree in the priestly and prophetic offices, she is decidedly weak in the kingly office. This is one reason why we are relatively powerless in the realm of the miraculous and so have not yet completed the Great Commission. If we are to proclaim the gospel in the spirit and power of Elijah, we will need to function in the kingly office effectively.

The kingly office can encompass various activities. But there is one aspect of this office which is crucial to proclaiming the kingdom of God with power. We are going to focus on the restoration of this aspect to the body of Christ. This aspect involves the use of *authority* to enforce the rule of the king.

The primary difference between a king and his subjects is that the king possesses authority and his subjects do not. The king exercises his authority over them in order to carry out his will and to enforce the rule of his kingdom. One common activity of Old Testament Israelite kings was fighting wars against enemy neighbors in order to fulfill God's promise to Abraham and his descendants regarding the Promised Land. Thus the kingly office can be used for *war* and for *destroying the works of the enemy*.

David and Goliath

In order to understand this, let us look at the prototypical and greatest king of the Old Testament, David. We will focus on his engagement with the Philistine champion Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:8 Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." 10 Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." 11 On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were *dismayed and terrified*.

Whenever the dreaded and fearsome giant confronted the Israelites, they were dismayed and terrified. They had no confidence and no idea how to defeat him. They chose to avoid engaging him in battle. Goliath can represent the giants in the realm of the spirit that the regional Church faces in different areas of the world. For example, one powerful giant which the Church in India faces is the giant of Hinduism. Even though the gospel was planted in India nearly two thousand years ago through the ministry of Jesus' disciple Thomas, Hinduism still claims the great majority of the one billion strong population of India.

The giant of Hinduism in India

When the giant of Hinduism rears its head against the Church---as it did in the late summer and fall of 2008 with the outbreak of violent persecution against believers in the state of Orissa---the Church is "dismayed and terrified." It does not dare to confront the giant, and instead flees and goes into hiding. Over the centuries the Church has never been properly trained to fight and defeat the giant, and so there is no other response available to her. Such is generally the case for the Church in

every country under heaven whether the giant is Islam, Buddhism, witchcraft, atheism, or secular humanism. Such was the case with the Israelites when challenged by Goliath.

My intent here is not to be critical of those individuals who have suffered persecution because they call themselves Christians. Rather the intent is to equip the Church more effectively to preach the gospel in areas where Christians live in fear of regional spiritual giants.

One day David's father Jesse instructed his son to go and look for his older brothers who were in Saul's army fighting against the Philistines. David left home and found his brothers on the front lines.

1 Samuel 17:23 As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. 24 When the Israelites saw the man, *they all ran from him in great fear.*

As usual, the Israelites to a man ran away in fear when Goliath approached. More often than we would like, the Church of Jesus Christ is guilty of the same thing. When we are confronted by a giant in the realm of the spirit, we retreat to the safe havens of our sanctuaries to busy ourselves with worthy activities like corporate worship, prayer, and preaching. In the meantime the giant goes unchallenged outside in the world, marauding and taking plunder at will. Clearly the Church is paralyzed by a spirit of fear when confronted by a giant. Did David also have this same spirit?

....26 David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is *this uncircumcised Philistine* that he should defy *the armies of the living God?*"

Unlike the other Israelites, there was no fear in David. Instead, indignation and holy anger arose in David toward the uncircumcised Philistine who dared to defy the servants of the living God. Let's look at the specific words he spoke to Goliath as the giant approached to kill him.

45 ...*I come against you* in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the LORD will hand you over *to me*, and *I will strike you down and cut off your head.* Today *I will give the carcasses* of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and *the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.*

We know that David's motivation was good---he desired to kill the giant so that the whole world would know that there was a God in Israel. But let us examine his approach.

How would the Church today judge David's spirituality?

Let us say that we do not know the outcome of this confrontation between David and Goliath. How would the Church today evaluate David's spirituality? Remember that Goliath was a battle-hardened warrior of over nine feet tall who had never before been defeated in battle. He came to the fight with a sword, spear, and javelin and a shield bearer going before him. His armor alone weighed about 125 pounds. His opponent was a solitary teenage boy whose skills were limited to caring for his father's sheep. He came to the fight with no armor but with only a slingshot and some stones.

But what is of particular interest here is David's words to the giant. What stands out is the emphasis on the pronouns *I* and *me*. "I come against you," "the Lord will hand you over to me," "I will strike you down," and "I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air..."

Today we are taught---and properly so---not to focus on ourselves, but on the Lord. But in a subtle but paralyzing misapplication of this fine teaching, we would never use the words *I* and *me* when confronting a giant. No, we would instead say, "*the Lord* comes against you," "*the Lord* will strike you down," and "*the Lord* will give your carcasses to the birds of the air..." The commonly-held understanding for this is that we can do nothing but cry out to the Lord and wait on Him to kill the giant. We are taught that we can only hide helplessly behind the Lord so that He will get all the glory. When we use the pronouns *I* and *me* as David did, we are taught that we are focusing on ourselves. We are not trusting God and giving Him the glory.

Based on our misunderstanding of this teaching, we would conclude---if we did not know the outcome of the duel---that David was a presumptuous and arrogant young man who would surely die at the hands of Goliath. But the Church universally applauds David as a great hero of the faith for defeating Goliath and leading the Israelites to eventual victory over the Philistines. Where has our understanding gone wrong?

God uses flesh and blood to defeat the giants

The typical response of the Church to giants on earth is to come together for prayer---as it should be. We cry out to God to rid the land of the marauding giants. We put our trust in Him and wait on Him. And wait. And continue to wait. There is usually little action after we pray. After all, we can do nothing. God Himself will kill the giant in His own time and way and get all the glory. As spiritual as this way of thinking may sound, it is not how David saw things. What did David understand that the Church today does not?

David knew that God moves in the world through flesh and blood. When God wants to kill a giant on earth, He generally will not come down from heaven in the form of Almighty God to take on the giant. No, He will raise up men and women who

understand the kingly office like David who will come against the giant and kill him with their own hands. The best example of this principle is the man Jesus Christ. God took on the form of a human being to defeat Satan and set the captives free. God sent His own Son.

Satan also moves in the same way---he operates through human beings whom he has enslaved.

The kingly office

Even before David was formally anointed to become king over Israel, he was already in a sense functioning in the office of king. With the boldness and power of a king, he fought Goliath and killed him. After he was formally elevated to become king, he led Israel in many more victories over their enemies in order for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham regarding the Promised Land. David was a man of war by virtue of the particular kingly characteristics he had received from the Lord.

Today the kingly office is being restored to the Church of Jesus Christ. No longer will we retreat in terror from the giants that confront us in the land that God has entrusted to us.

1 Samuel 17:48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, *David ran quickly toward the battle line* to meet him.

No, like David we will advance against the giants and meet them in battle. The Lord is with us and in us, and as we walk in the kingly office we will defeat the giant in the name of our God.

There are three characteristics of the kingly office.

- Kings have authority to give commands. Because they possess authority, they do not need to ask or beg.
- True kings are bold and fearless before the enemy. They do not run away in fear.
- Kings have actual power to destroy their enemies or the works of the enemy. David developed physical skills from his experience caring for and protecting his father's sheep from wild animals. Because of these skills God could use him to kill the giant. After David become king of Israel, he had armies consisting of soldiers who were well-trained and equipped with deadly weapons for engaging and defeating enemies. In his army David had actual military power for accomplishing God's purposes.

We are not talking about military power here, but the power to heal the sick and cast out demons to demonstrate to the lost that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. In this regard we have been given power to destroy the work of the enemy-

--to set the captives free from sin and Satan through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the function of the kingly office.

1 John 3:8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

Not All Miracles are from God

Before we study how Jesus taught and commanded his disciples to heal the sick, let us pause for a moment. It is important to consider the fact that not all miracles are from God. After we understand this, then we will study the miraculous healings which *are* from Jesus Christ.

The Lord can heal the sick in a variety of ways. However, some “miracles” seen even in church gatherings are not necessarily from God. Moreover, not all who come in the name of Jesus Christ are from God. Therefore we must be careful to follow Scripture in order not to be deceived.

Matthew 24:4 Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. (NIV)

Jesus warns us to beware of being deceived by some who will come in the name of Jesus Christ. In the body of Christ, however, there is little attention given to this danger despite repeated warnings from Jesus. This inattention is due in part to our undiscerning tendency as Christians to be loving and non-judgmental.

“The Anointing”

Is “the anointing” as applied to servants of God today consistent with New Testament usage?

Today in charismatic circles the terms “the anointing” and “anointed” are often used to refer to certain servants of God who can prophesy in the name of Jesus, and in his name drive out demons and perform many miracles like healing the sick. In this introductory study we would like to examine whether or not the usage of such terms is consistent with the New Testament.

The following are the instances of the words “anointing,” “anointed,” and “anoint” as found in the New International Version of the New Testament. Instances of anointed priests, prophets, and kings in the Old Testament were types or shadows which were all fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ.

Anointing:

Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by *anointing* you with the oil of joy.

The word *anointing* here clearly refers to the anointing on the Messiah Jesus Christ, and not to an anointing upon believers to prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

1 John 2:20 But you have an *anointing* from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

Here the word *anointing* on believers refers to an anointing for them to know the truth, and not to an anointing on them to prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

1 John 2:27 As for you, the *anointing* you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his *anointing* teaches you about all things and as that *anointing* is real, not counterfeit...

Here the word *anointing* on believers refers to an anointing which teaches them about all things, and not to an anointing upon them to prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

Anointed:

Mark 6:13 They drove out many demons and *anointed* many sick people with oil and healed them.

Here the disciples were physically anointing sick people with oil. The verse does not refer to them being anointed to prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has *anointed* me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

This reference is directly to the Messiah who would be anointed to preach good news to the poor. It is not a reference to believers who prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

Acts 4:26 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his *Anointed One*.

Here the reference is directly to Christ, the Anointed One, and not to a believer who can prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles. Note that the Greek can be rendered either "Christ" or "Anointed One." Many versions of the Bible use the word "Christ" instead of "Anointed One." This observation will be highly significant later.

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you *anointed*.

The reference here is directly to Jesus Christ whom God anointed. It does not refer to believers who prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

Acts 10:38 how God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Here the reference has the Messiah Jesus Christ anointed with the spirit and power to do good and to heal those under the power of the devil. It clearly does not refer to believers who prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

2 Corinthians 1:21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He *anointed* us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Here believers in Christ are *anointed* by God as a seal of His ownership on us to guarantee our heavenly inheritance. It is not a reference to an anointing upon us to prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles.

Anoint:

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to *anoint* Jesus' body.

This reference is to the women physically anointing Jesus' body with spices.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and *anoint* him with oil in the name of the Lord.

This refers to the physical anointing of the sick believer with oil, not to an anointing on believers to prophecy, cast out demons and perform miracles.

These instances exhaust the use of the words *anointing*, *anointed*, and *anoint* in the New International Version of the New Testament.

Conclusion

We see that the only use of the word "anointing" in the New Testament as applied to a believer is found in 1 John 2 where the Lord's anointing teaches us about all things so that we all know the truth. It clearly does not refer to any anointing upon us to prophesy, heal the sick and cast out demons. Moreover, the use of the word "anointed" in the New Testament almost always refers to Christ Himself. The only meaningful instance where it does not is found in 1 Corinthians 1:21-22. There, believers in Christ are *anointed* by God as a seal of His ownership on us to

guarantee our heavenly inheritance. Again, this use of "anointed" does not refer to believers who prophesy, cast out demons and perform miracles such as healing the sick.

Clearly, disciples of Jesus Christ have been given power (*dunamis*) and authority (*exousia*) to minister to the oppressed in His name. However, the Greek word *Christos* and its Hebrew equivalent *Moshiach* meaning "the anointed one" who saves us are applied only to the Son of God Himself.

It is clear that as the Christ, Jesus was anointed to save us. The Greek word for save is *sozo*. The word *sozo* includes not only saving from sin, but also to deliver or protect: to heal from sickness, to preserve, to save, to do well, to be or make whole. It is clear that only Jesus Christ was anointed to save us in this way. No man or disciple is anointed to save us and heal us and deliver us.

What about the Old Testament?

The Old Testament contains shadows (Colossians 2:17) and types which are fulfilled in the New Testament. Instances of "the anointing" upon men and of "anointed ones" in the Old Testament were all fulfilled in Messiah Jesus: the only one anointed to save, heal, and deliver.

Therefore, current usage of the word "anointed" and "anointing" to refer to those who can minister with power does not follow New Testament practice. Proper usage applies to one person alone in the New Testament: the only one anointed to save, the Messiah Jesus Christ. Messiah (in Hebrew *Moshiach*) also means "the anointed one." Only Christ, through His death on the cross, is anointed to save us from sin and subsequent consequences like disease and the second death. No disciple of His should presume to take on anything resembling or even approaching that title. We should therefore exercise discernment toward those who come in the name of Christ and who claim to have "the anointing" or to be "anointed." Why?

Watch out that you are not deceived by the "anointed ones"

Matthew 24:4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. (NIV)

Here Jesus commands us to watch out so that we are not deceived by the many who will come in his name and claim to be the Christ. This verse as it stands makes little sense. This is because any servant of God who comes to us in the name of Jesus claiming to be the Christ will be promptly rejected by the Church. He will in fact deceive no one. In line with this, there is no one in the Church today who actually claims to be the Christ. But Jesus warns us that there will be many. How can we understand his warning? It is vital that we understand it properly in order that we will not be among the many who will be deceived in the last days. The answer is that we may have misunderstood what Jesus actually meant.

As mentioned earlier, the Greek expression for *Christ* can also be translated *anointed one*. If we make this substitution in Matthew 24:5, we come up with "for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the anointed one,' and will deceive many."

Today there are in fact many who come in the name of Jesus Christ who claim to be "anointed ones." They claim to have *the anointing* or to be *anointed* to prophesy, to cast out demons, heal the sick, and perform miracles. The practices and the supernatural manifestations which appear in their meetings are usually attributed to *the anointing* upon them or their ministries. Unfortunately the use of such terms to refer to such people, as we have seen, is not consistent with the New Testament.

We are certainly not concluding that anyone who uses the term "anointing" in a way not consistent with New Testament scripture must be a false prophet. Some are using it innocently and simply out of ignorance following the convention which is commonly used in some circles of the body of Christ. But others may actually be false prophets. Therefore it would behoove us to exercise discernment towards servants of God who claim to have "the anointing" or to be "anointed" to heal the sick, to cast out demons, and to perform signs and miracles.

Matthew 24:11 and *many false prophets* will appear and *deceive many people*.

...23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For *false Christs* [or false "anointed ones"] and *false prophets* will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time. 26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

Jesus' warning here is a bit mysterious. There is no one today who has been proclaiming that Christ has appeared "in the desert" or "in the inner rooms"---or anywhere else on earth for that matter---and that we should gather there to meet with him. How then should we interpret his warning? Today in some circles people are drawn by the thousands to meetings wherever an "anointed" servant of God is ministering miraculous healing to the sick in the name of Jesus Christ. Could the above Scriptures be warning us to beware of ministers to claim to have the anointing? Whenever and wherever these "anointed ones" are ministering, people will shout, "Come, he's over there!" or "Come, he's over here!" and the crowds will be irresistibly drawn like moths to a flame to experience the miracles and "the anointing." But it will not be like that when the Messiah Jesus Christ, the true Anointed One, appears.

The appearance of the Christ will be like the flashing of lightning

Matthew 24:27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 *Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.*

What could this "carcass" refer to? Who are these "vultures" who gather at the carcass? Now we might have some light on this enigmatic verse.

Matthew 7:15 *Watch out for false prophets. ...22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you... 2 *Many will follow their shameful ways* and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 *In their greed* these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up...

1 Timothy 6:5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and *who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

We must be careful

How can we be careful not to be deceived by false prophets who can perform miracles? The only gauge must be *Scripture itself*. The miracles must be performed as they are performed in Scripture. We must be very cautious toward 1) methods and practices and 2) supernatural manifestations which are not strongly supported by Scripture.

In the Elijah Challenge, there are three general criteria for determining what supernatural practices are acceptable. We do this to stay on the safe side.

1. The practice or method must be clearly *commanded by the Lord* for us to perform it, especially in the New Testament which is a fulfillment of the Old Testament.
2. The practice or method must have *actually been performed* by a disciple of the Lord in Scripture, preferably in the New Testament.
3. It is best if the practice or method is not simply a one-time occurrence in Scripture, but is *based solidly on Scriptural principles*.

We must exercise caution and discernment toward practices or methods involving the spirit realm that do not meet these criteria.

As just one example, did Jesus ever command his disciples to drive out territorial spirits and principalities? Was this action actually performed anywhere in the Bible by a servant of God? No, Jesus never commanded it nor did anyone in the Bible ever perform such an action.

These same three criteria we also apply to the many different supernatural *manifestations* that we see in charismatic churches today. As just one example, do the supernatural manifestations of gold dust and diamonds appearing during meetings find strong support in Scripture? No, they do not.

Why do we need to be so careful and conservative? Because Jesus *commands* us to "watch out that no one deceives you." He *commands* us to watch out for the many false prophets who will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect, if that were possible. It is safer to err on the side of being too cautious than on the side of being too liberal and then falling prey to deception.

If we do not heed the Lord's repeated warnings, we may be deceived. If we are, we will not be able to blame the false prophet who deceived us. We all have access to the Scriptures. There will be consequences for those who allow themselves to be deceived.

Not "anointing" but power and authority

It is not at all clear from New Testament Scripture that New Testament disciples have been "anointed" or given "the anointing" to minister with supernatural power as is commonly claimed today.

By contrast, it is abundantly clear from New Testament Scriptures that we have been given *power and authority* by Jesus Christ to heal the sick and cast out demons for the proclamation of the kingdom of God to the lost.

Let us heed Jesus' warning about being deceived and be careful to discern and to divide the Scriptures properly.

Not the "Christ" but the Son of Man

Interestingly, when Jesus teaches about his Second Coming in Matthew 24, he never refers to himself as "Christ." He consistently refers to himself there instead as "the Son of Man." (The same thing is true of the parallel passages in Mark 13 and in Luke 21.) Whenever Jesus uses the terms "Christ" or "Christs" as rendered by the NIV in Matthew 24, he in fact is referring to a *false Christ or false anointed one*. He makes a clear distinction and puts distance between "Christ" as rendered in the NIV and "the Son of Man."

This is consistent with the hypothesis that incidences of the term "Christ(s)" in Matthew 24 should instead be rendered "anointed one(s)"--- as in "false anointed ones and false prophets" in verse 24.

It is significant that in November 2008 J. Lee Grady, Editor of Charisma Magazine, wrote an article which was entitled *Preparing for a Charismatic Meltdown*.

Mr. Ed Tarkowski independently wrote a relevant article which appears immediately below.

A Christian Perspective on Chakras and "The Revival"

"Though many tie the current revival to the laughing phenomenon of Rodney Howard Browne and The Toronto Experience, there are many other manifestations besides the laughing phenomenon. But more important than what we call these phenomena is that we know the source of these manifestations. Call it what you will, the power that has gained a foothold on the Church through Browne and Toronto is the foundation of the entire global "revival." I can personally testify to the fact that it is kundalini power. I can testify that it is real power. I can tell you it is power straight out of the practices of the New Age and the Manifest Sons of God doctrines that have penetrated Christianity. I can tell you it is not power coming from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The laughing phenomena itself has been associated with the 5th chakra (the Throat Chakra) of the New Age, but one of the major manifestations during the past two years has been the manifestation of spiritual fire. The shaking of the "hot hand" manifesting "the anointing" is now a common thing among those distributing it, such as Benny Hinn, Rod Parsley and Mike Perky, all seen on Paul Crouch's Trinity Broadcasting Network. It is apparent the so-called "fire of the Holy Spirit" introduced by Browne and Toronto only three short years ago has indeed spread among "the anointed ones." But this type of spiritual fire, with its physical sensations and intense burning in the body, is not scriptural. Jeremiah did not have literal fire burning in his bones, but the modern "prophets" do. It is not Holy Ghost fire we are seeing today, but the kundalini experience of the New Age burning its way through the Church. That should become more evident when I post a section on occult terms associated with such phenomena. For now, I submit this material so you can do your own comparison."

This study and much more are available on the internet at:
<http://www.velocity.net/~edju/kundalini.htm> and also
<http://www.velocity.net/~edju/test1.htm>.

The message which is confirmed by the miracles

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching were not with *enticing words of man's wisdom*, but *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (MKJV)

The preaching which is confirmed by a demonstration of the Spirit and of power is not with enticing words of man's wisdom. Today, perhaps lacking demonstrations of power, preachers employ persuasive human wisdom to get people to come to their meetings. But we are seeing personally that the Lord is pleased to confirm a very simple message with miraculous signs.

1 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brothers, when I came to you, did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you *except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*.

The message is simply Jesus Christ who was crucified for the forgiveness of our sins and who was raised from the dead. The message is that we are sinners, and we need our sins to be forgiven in order to escape from condemnation in hell. The message is that Jesus Christ has authority to forgive our sins and grant us eternal life.

Repent

Mark 1:14 And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God draws near. *Repent*, and believe the gospel. (MKJV)

The message is repentance from sin, and turning to God through Jesus Christ.

Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should *repent*. 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

The message of repentance preached by the disciples was confirmed by miracles of healing and deliverance from demons.

Repentance results in visible fruit

With regard to repentance, John the Baptist preached: "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." (Luke 3:8)

Genuine repentance is accompanied by visible fruit and righteous deeds. If good fruit is not visible, then the repentance is not genuine. The person's sins have not been forgiven.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, *he will bear much fruit...* 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; *such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.*

That person is like a fruitless and withered branch which will be picked up and thrown into the fire. Whatever this may mean, we do not want it to happen to us.

John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, *showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

We show ourselves to be true disciples of Jesus by bearing much fruit for him. What kind of fruit did his disciples bear for him? We know from Acts that they put into action his command to preach the gospel to all creation. And we can assume that his disciples, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, had been sanctified from sin and were living holy lives. They were doing good and performing righteous works.

John 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love...*

Remaining in his love

We have heard time and time again that Jesus loves us. However, it is possible that we could lose that love through disobedience. If we want to remain in his love, we must obey his commands. This is the requirement for us to remain in his love. What are his commands in addition to fulfilling the Great Commission?

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; *without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

We are commanded to live peaceful lives which are holy and free from sin. Holiness includes the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Without these no one will see the Lord. This is the message which the Lord is pleased to confirm with demonstrations of power to encourage our listeners to *obey* the gospel, and not simply to give mental assent to it.

Messages preached from pulpits today are largely devoid of teachings on repentance, obedience, and holiness. They rather entice us and focus on God's earthly blessings in this life to make us happier, more comfortable and successful. There are undoubtedly personal benefits from messages based on man's wisdom, not to mention the benefit of church growth. But today there is gross imbalance in

our preaching, with little time given to repentance. Little wonder that there are so few demonstrations of the Spirit and of power in our churches today.

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching were not with *enticing words of man's wisdom*, but *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

If we look around at the world today, we know the hour is very late. God is revealing His wrath now.

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God...

We His servants must now serve Him in fear and trembling. We must now stop building with wood, hay, and straw; and start building with gold, silver, and costly stones.

Our Approach to Healing is Specific to the Task

When supernatural healing is mentioned, many people automatically think of the “gift of healing” through which the healing can take place. But Scripture teaches that there is more than just one way to minister to the infirm. Which way or approach we choose can be related to the task or context in which we are involved. Let us take as an example the gift of healing. According to Scripture, the gift of healing is primarily for ministering to infirm believers. As such, the gift can be manifest when believers gather together. Moreover, some churches may have what is called a “Healing Room” where trained believers minister to those who come for healing. Although Healing Rooms can be used for reaching out to the unchurched community, they are most usually frequented by believers from the church. This the miraculous healings which take place in a Healing Room might be manifestations of the gift of healing.

Gifts of Healing

1 Corinthians 12:4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ...7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given *for the common good*.

“The common good” here is understood to be for the good *of the body of Christ*. All nine gifts of the Holy Spirit therefore are primarily for ministering to believers in the body of Christ. In particular, the “gift of healing” is for ministering healing to infirm believers in the context of building up the body of Christ.

8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, *to another gifts of healing* by that one Spirit,

1 Corinthians 14:12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts *that build up the church*.

What if you don't believe the gift of healing is for today?

There are conservative evangelical believers who believe that the supernatural gift of healing as described in 1 Corinthians 12 is no longer in operation today. Or perhaps their church, one way or another, has chosen to avoid teaching about this gift. Whatever you may or may not believe about the gift of healing, it will have little bearing on what we are going to study here. We are going to focus on something different which is far more foundational and applicable than the gift of healing, something that as we shall see is strongly supported by Scripture.

Something more foundational than the gift of healing

As important as the gift of healing might be for ministering to suffering believers, there is something more foundational: *healing the sick to demonstrate to the lost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world*. This purpose and this context stand in contrast to ministering healing to infirm believers.

The task which involves us in this study is to minister healing in the context of proclaiming the gospel to the lost, *just as Christ and his early disciples did*. When Christ appeared two thousand years ago, he came *not* to build up the body of Christ or to minister to believers. At that time there was no body of Christ on earth as there is now. Rather, Christ came to *save the lost*. The miracles that he performed were for the express purpose of convincing *the lost* to believe on him as their Messiah. The purpose of Jesus and his early disciples then is identical to our purpose now. Therefore let us first study exactly how Jesus ministered healing to the sick in the gospels.

Something that any believer can do

John 14:12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me *will do what I have been doing*."

What did Jesus do when he was on earth? He proclaimed the kingdom of God, he healed the sick, he cast out demons, and he made disciples. Scripture tells us that anyone who believes in Jesus will do these same works. Therefore let us examine *how* Jesus healed the sick after he was anointed by the Holy Spirit. In the same way we will minister healing to the sick.

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives..."

According to Isaiah's prophecy, God would *anoint* the Messiah with the Spirit to fulfill his ministry. In the gospels, this was fulfilled as Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River.

Luke 3:21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Luke 4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. *He ate nothing during those days...*

After Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit he fasted as he was tempted by the devil over a period of forty days. The fasting was before he began to heal the sick and cast out demons to demonstrate to the Israelites that he was the Messiah. Fasting thus can be important if you want to minister in power and boldness like Jesus.

Luke 4:14 Then Jesus returned *in the power of the Spirit* to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

What happened when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus?

Luke 4:31 Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. 32 And they were *astonished* at His teaching, *for His word was with authority*.

After the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus and he fasted for forty days, he received authority from his Father. He exercised this authority through speaking forth words, and it was in a way that astonished people. Let us look at the nature of this authority and how Jesus exercised it.

Luke 4:33 Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, 34 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

As Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, there was an unexpected disturbance. A man became demonized in the presence of the Lord, and he began to scream out uncontrollably by the power of the demon. For those who have never witnessed such a thing it can be frightening. What action did Jesus take?

Before we find out, let us pose two questions. Firstly, what would a typical believer do in such a situation? As an example, let's say that a churchgoer has invited his unbelieving neighbor to attend church on Sunday. It happens that the neighbor has a very active interest in all things supernatural, including witchcraft and the New Age. With the churchgoer seated in the back pew with his neighbor next to him, the pastor preaches about the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to bear our sins. Suddenly the neighbor becomes demonized and begins to scream out uncontrollably. What would a typical believer do?

Some believers undoubtedly would be afraid, get up and run. However, those who are more spiritual would not run away, but would perform some spiritual activity like prayer. They might call on the Lord and ask Him to deliver their friend from the demon and to keep it from entering them. Believers from the charismatic or Pentecostal tradition would likely pray in a very certain way---in other tongues or languages as they have been taught. These other languages are not understood by men.

Now let's consider the second question. What might a scripturally well-trained believer do in the situation? A scripturally well-trained believer would do exactly as Jesus did.

35 But Jesus *rebuked* him, saying, "*Be quiet, and come out of him!*"

- Did Jesus pray for him and ask the Father to deliver him? No, Jesus instead spoke directly to the demon and rebuked it harshly, commanding it to be quiet and to come out.

- Did Jesus say: "*Father*, we command this demon to be quiet and to come out of him"? No, Jesus did not speak or address his Father, but he directly addressed the demon.
- Do you think Jesus closed his eyes? There is no evidence or reason why Jesus would close his eyes when issuing a command to a demon.
- Was there any *priestly* component such as prayer or thanksgiving to the Father? No, the action was completely *kingly* in nature---purely a command directed to the demon.

Why did Jesus not pray and ask the Father to deliver the man? It was because when he was anointed with the Holy Spirit he received authority over demons from his Father. Because of this authority, Jesus did not need his Father's assistance to drive out the demon. It was under his authority, and thus it was forced to obey Jesus' command.

And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, *it came out of him* and did not hurt him.

How did Jesus perform this miracle? He performed the miracle by exercising the authority given to him by his Father. Authority is not exercised by praying, but rather by *commanding*.

36 Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a *word* this is!

They were amazed at the word he spoke. What word? The word was, "Be quiet, and come out of him." Why was this word so amazing to the onlookers? It was simply the fact that an invisible spiritual being had obeyed the spoken command of a flesh-and-blood human being. This they had never experienced. As far as they knew, only the invisible God in heaven had such authority over spirit beings. But the one who had performed the miracle also had authority over spirit beings as well. And he was a flesh-and-blood human being---just like the onlookers.

For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."

This human being appeared to possess authority and power over unclean spirits just as God Himself did. They actually obeyed his command and came out of the man. Who was this man anyway?

We see that when Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River, he received from God the Father divine authority over demons. He used and exercised this authority not by praying to His Father, but by issuing commands to the unclean spirits. We see here a foundational principle which is obvious to anyone.

If we have authority over something or someone, we exercise that authority not by praying, but by commanding. Let's say we own a pet dog. Under normal circumstances, our dog is under our authority. If we want our dog to sit, do we pray to God and ask Him to help us or ask Him to make our dog sit? That would be ridiculous. No, when we want our dog to sit, we fix our wide open eyes on him and command him emphatically, "sit!" And he obeys us. This is precisely how Jesus performed the miracle of delivering the man from the demon. Of course we are not saying that Jesus never prayed, but that there were specific occasions on which he did not pray, but rather *commanded*.

37 And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

How did Jesus Deal with a Purely Physical Infirmary?

Some of us may have been taught that in some circumstances we believers have authority to cast demons out of afflicted people. This is true and scriptural as we shall see later. Demons are intelligent beings just as humans are intelligent but they lack physical bodies. They understand when spoken to, and when verbally rebuked by someone who has authority over them, they must obey the command. But how did Jesus deal with a purely *physical* infirmity where no demon was present?

Conventional teaching holds that dealing with physical infirmities is very different from dealing with demons. Unlike demons, purely physical infirmities are not intelligent entities which can hear and understand. Thus it would appear that one cannot rebuke or command or speak to them anymore than one can talk to an object like a tree. We are taught that when someone has a purely physical infirmity, we can only pray to God who has the authority to heal and to ask Him to do it according to His will and time. Aside from seeking the help of a physician---which is fine---we are helpless to do anything beyond that. Such is the conventional wisdom in the body of Christ today. To examine this teaching, let us look at how Jesus ministered to the physically infirm. Did he pray to the Father to heal them?

Luke 4:38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

Simon's mother-in-law was not demonized, but simply had a high fever. There is no demonic activity here. Jesus is asked to help her. What does he do?

Luke 4:39 So he bent over her and *rebuked* the fever, and it left her.

- Did Jesus pray for her? No, he did not pray at all.
- Did Jesus say: "*Father*, we rebuke this fever"? No, he did not. Believers of charismatic and pentecostal persuasion are often taught to do this when ministering to the physically infirm. But Jesus never called on his Father during the act of ministering to the infirm.
- Did Jesus close his eyes? No, there is no evidence that Jesus closed his eyes when issuing a command to the fever. (Do you close your eyes when you command your pet dog to sit?) Strangely, some believers habitually close their eyes when ministering to the sick.
- Was there any *priestly* component such as prayer or thanksgiving to the Father? No, the action was completely *kingly* in nature---purely a command directed to the demon.

How did Jesus perform this miracle? He healed the woman simply by *rebuking* the fever much as he had *rebuked* the demon in the man at the synagogue. In the original New Testament language of Greek, the word for “rebuke” in the two accounts is one and the same. Jesus spoke to the fever and commanded it to leave the woman, and it obeyed his command. The woman was healed of the fever. From this we can conclude that when Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River, he received authority not only over demons, but *over physical infirmities* as well.

This would appear to be quite clear. But we are not quite satisfied yet with this explanation. We understand why demons, having intelligence, should respond to spoken commands. But physical infirmities have no similar ability to hear, understand, and then respond to spoken commands. How could Jesus speak to the fever?

It's all about authority

Let's begin with an operational definition of authority: *whatever is under your authority must submit to you.*

As an illustration of this, take the example again of our pet dog. Since he is under our authority, he will obey us when we command him to sit. But clearly there are other things which are also under our authority. Most of us have raised children. When they were still young, they were under our authority. Whenever they misbehaved, we would correct them. If little five-year-old Bobby was striking his little sister, what would we do? Certainly we would not get down on our knees, pray to God and ask Him to stop our little Bobby from beating his sister, and then wait on Him for His help. No, we would immediately give a forceful and decisive command to Bobby to “stop!” If need be, we could even physically restrain him. Whatever the case, Bobby would stop hitting his sister.

We have here two things which are clearly different from one another: our dog and our child. Our dog is not our child, and our child is not our dog. But in certain circumstances we utilize the same approach toward both. We command our dog, and he obeys us. We command our Bobby, and he obeys us. We can do this because both our dog and our Bobby are under our authority, and therefore both must obey our spoken command in the same way.

Jesus was given authority by his Father over both demons and physical infirmities. Therefore even though they are not identical in nature, he could rebuke both and issue commands to both. Both would obey him resulting in miracles.

The same incident according to Matthew and Mark

Matthew 8:15 He *touched her hand* and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

Matthew tells us that Jesus also touched her hand when he healed Simon's mother-in-law. Often, although not always, Jesus laid his hands on the infirm to heal them. The reason he did this was because he had healing power resident within himself. When he was anointed by the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River, the Father gave him miraculous power to heal infirmities. This healing power could be transmitted to the infirm through the physical laying on of his hands or even when infirm people touched him.

Mark 1:31 So he went to her, took her hand and *helped her up*. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

Mark records that Jesus also took her hand and *helped her up* to complete the miraculous healing.

According to Luke, Matthew, and Mark, Jesus did three things in healing Peter's mother-in-law:

- he rebuked the fever
- he touched her hand
- he helped her to get up
- *he actually did not pray for her*

Can a believer minister healing in the same way to someone who is sick in bed like Simon's mother-in-law? If we believe the Lord's words in John 14:12, the answer is "yes."

We challenge you to do the same thing that Jesus did here. We are not referring simply to ministering to an infirm person without any visible results, but actually healing him or her as Jesus healed the woman. But let us first learn exactly *how* Jesus rebuked the infirmity. Rebuking an infirmity in the correct fashion is essential. Failure to command as Jesus taught his disciples can result in failing to healing the infirm person.

Jesus used Authority and the Laying on of Hands to Heal

Luke 4:40 When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, *and laying his hands on each one*, he healed them.

Jesus often laid his hands on physically infirm people to heal them. In driving demons out of people, he would rebuke them by issuing commands to them with authority. These were two practices that he often utilized.

41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he *rebuked* them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

A man with leprosy

Luke 5:12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

This gentleman did not have a demon, but rather a dreaded physical disease known as leprosy.

13 Jesus reached out his hand and *touched the man*. "I am willing," he said. "*Be clean!*"

We see that first Jesus laid his hand on the leper as he often did when healing the physically infirm.

- Did Jesus pray for this man? Again, it is clear that Jesus did not pray to the Father to heal the leper.
- Did Jesus say: "*Father*, we command this man to be clean"? Again, we see that Jesus did not combine prayer to His Father along with a command as some believers often practice when ministering to the sick.
- Did Jesus close his eyes? There is no reason why Jesus should his eyes when issuing a command to an infirmity. But many believers will unexplainably close their eyes when ministering to an infirm person.
- Was there any *priestly* component such as prayer or thanksgiving to the Father? No, the action was completely *kingly* in nature---purely a command directed to the demon.

And immediately the leprosy left him.

Jesus performed this miracle by laying his hands on the leper and then exercising his authority over the infirmity by commanding it to "be clean."

A man with a shriveled hand

Matthew 12:9 Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,
10 and a man with a shriveled hand was there... 13 Then he said to the man, "*Stretch out your hand.*"

- Did Jesus pray for this man?
- Did Jesus say: "*Father*, we command this man to stretch out his hand"?
- Did Jesus close his eyes?
- Was there any priestly component such as prayer or thanksgiving?

The answer to all four questions is clearly "no." Sadly, when some believers minister to the infirm, they will habitually close their eyes and say, "Father, in the name of Jesus we command this person to be healed. Thank you, Jesus." It is no wonder that believers habitually fail to heal the sick as Jesus did.

So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

Every believer knows that Jesus was able to perform mighty miracles when he was on earth. The problem is that Jesus is no longer on earth to heal the sick and cast out demons; he is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

How then does Jesus heal the sick today? Who in this present age does the work that Jesus did when he was on earth?

Who Heals the Sick Today?

John 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me *will do what I have been doing*. He will do even greater works, for I am going to the Father.

What did Jesus do when he was on earth?

- He preached the gospel
- He healed the sick
- He cast out demons
- He made disciples
- *He actually did not pray for the sick*

Therefore, you are going to:

- preach the gospel *as Jesus did*
- heal the sick *as Jesus did*
- cast out demons *as Jesus did*
- make disciples *as Jesus did*

There you are not simply going to pray for the sick, you are going *to heal the sick in the very same way that Jesus did*. We are not at all saying that believers should not pray for the sick. But we note that there is not a single healing miracle in the gospel which was purely a result of Jesus praying to his Father. Rather, he would speak forth with authority, and the person would be healed. We are learning to do what Jesus did.

Does the Bible teach that disciples of Jesus Christ have been given any authority to heal the sick as he did?

What Scripture says

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he *gave them power and authority* to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,

To the Twelve original apostles Jesus gave power and authority to drive out all demons and to heal diseases. From that moment on they had the potential of healing the sick and casting out demons as Jesus did. The Father had given great power and authority to Jesus; now he gave a measure of that power and authority to his twelve disciples. (We cannot say that Jesus gave them authority which was equal in degree to that which his Father had given him.) For what purpose did Jesus give them this authority?

2 and he sent them out *to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick*.

The specific purpose for which Jesus gave them power and authority over diseases and demons was for preaching the kingdom of God to the lost. It was not primarily for ministering to infirm believers, but rather for demonstrating to the lost that Jesus was in fact the promised Messiah. If we want to learn to heal the sick using the authority that Jesus has given us, we must remember that the purpose and motivation are crucial---the context should be *evangelistic in nature*. Although the authority does work for ministering healing to believers, it is primarily meant for demonstrating to the world that our God is the only true God and that Jesus is the only way to Him.

Note in verse 2 above that Jesus then sent them out and commanded them to do two things. The first was to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost. It is legitimate to ask whether or not these commands are still valid today. Clearly the first one---to preach the kingdom of God---is just as valid today as when Jesus sent out his twelve disciples. But is the second command---to heal the sick---still valid for disciples of Christ today as they preach the gospel? Or was this command directed only at the twelve original apostles, and after they died the command was nullified?

We will answer this very important question as we go along. We will discover that the command to heal the sick was not meant only for the twelve apostles, but for every disciple whom Jesus sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God.

What is abundantly clear of today's Church is that although there may be many who preach the gospel as Jesus commanded, there are extremely few who actually heal the sick as Jesus did and as he commanded his disciples to do when he sent them out. In effect, the Church has disobeyed the command of Jesus Christ with regarding to healing the sick in the context of preaching the gospel. If we have indeed disobeyed the Lord's commands, we should acknowledge it and repent of our disobedience. Repentance will entail *successfully* obeying his command to heal the sick as the gospel is preached, not simply *attempting* to heal the sick.

We realize that this involves a paradigm shift, not simply an adjustment to our way of thinking. But it is firmly rooted in what Jesus taught his disciples in the gospels and in Acts. Over the millennia, the Church has drifted away from what Jesus taught his disciples regarding healing the sick. Now the very expression "healing the sick" will raise eyebrows and suspicions of a false teaching.

According to our present paradigm, the command for believers to "heal the sick" makes little sense. How can we be commanded to do something that only the Sovereign God has the power and authority to do? We can of course *try* to heal the sick, but how under God's heaven can we be *commanded* to heal the sick? We will have the answers to these questions later, but for the time being, consider the following. It does not matter whether God commands us to do something "natural" like feeding the poor or to perform something "supernatural" like healing the sick. If He commands us to do something, clearly He will give us the power and authority and enable us to do it successfully.

First of all, why does the overwhelming majority of believers fail to heal the sick as Jesus commanded? To be sure, many are not even taught that believers have been given authority to heal the sick. However, others are aware that they have this authority, but still fail to use it successfully to heal the sick to demonstrate to the lost that Jesus is the only way to the Father. They instead just pray for the sick, which is upon reflection much easier and less risky than healing the sick as Jesus did.

The difference between *praying for the sick* and *healing the sick*

Praying for the sick is easy. It amounts to asking God in prayer to heal someone. If after the prayer the person is healed, we say "praise God." If after prayer the person is not healed, we say "praise God, it's not His will." We do not feel that we have failed if the person remains sick after prayer to God because God is sovereign--He can say "yes" or He can say "no" to our prayer. Our job is simply to ask; it is God's responsibility to heal. We understand that praying for the sick is therefore risk-free. We are not responsible for the outcome. Praying for the sick is easy.

Healing the sick as Jesus did is a different proposition altogether. What does it mean to heal the sick as Jesus did?

"Healing the sick by faith"

Within different circles of the body of Christ around the world I have found that there are varied understandings of the meaning of "healing the sick." Some believe that healing the sick is completely a matter of faith according to Mark 11:24.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

According to this understanding, after I ask God in prayer to heal someone, I simply believe that the person is healed, and the person will in fact be healed. Because I truly believe that the person is healed, I will praise God and give thanks to Him for the healing.

Imagine the following scenario. You have entered an unreached village in Africa where witchcraft has complete dominance over the people. You gather the people together and tell them about the saving power of Jesus Christ. Because they already know about the supernatural power of witchcraft, they ask you to demonstrate the superior power of your God by bringing you a sick child for your God to heal. The child is suffering from constant intense pain. This is the very context for which Jesus gave power and authority to his disciples and commanded them to use to heal the sick. So you attempt to heal the child. After prayer to God, you lay hands on him and intone, "be healed in the name of Jesus Christ." Because you truly believe that the child is healed, you declare before the assembled

villagers, "Praise God, this child is healed by faith! By faith he is now completely free from pain!"

All eyes are fastened on the child. Unfortunately the pain has not subsided one iota and he is still in agony. Have you indeed healed the child as Jesus healed the sick two thousand years ago? Is this the kind of healing Jesus commanded his disciples when he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God? Are the villagers who witnessed this "miracle" now convinced that Jesus Christ is greater than witchcraft and deciding to repent of their sins?

No, healing the sick "by faith" in this manner is not what Jesus did. He *actually* performed miracles of healing. The infirm were *actually* healed, often instantly, proving that he was in fact the promised Messiah. The correct definition of healing the sick as Jesus commanded his disciples when he sent them out is decidedly *not* "healing the sick by faith" as practiced by some churches and believers today.

"Healing the sick by faith" (or "receiving your healing by faith") can have a place when ministering to infirm believers in the context of building up the body of Christ. But in the context of evangelizing the lost, it is *not* what Jesus commanded his disciples to do.

Pushing people down

There are ministers who when they minister to the infirm will push them backwards with a hand to their forehead. If this is done successfully, the infirm person will be lying on the floor at the feet of the minister. Sometimes there will be an entire row of people who have been pushed down in this way. Is this what Jesus meant when he commanded his disciples to heal the sick as they went forth to preach the gospel to the lost?

No, Jesus did not practice this and neither did he teach his disciples to heal the sick in this way. Such a practice could be confusing to the lost and might not draw them to Jesus. Even when this is practiced in church meetings among those who understand, are all those who are pushed down to the floor really healed of their infirmities?

We understand that there is a phenomenon known as "being slain in the Spirit," and that the miraculous can occur in this way.

Healing the sick as Jesus did

Healing the sick is ministering to the infirm as Jesus did and as he taught and commanded his disciples when he sent them out to preach the gospel to the lost. Healing the sick means actually opening the eyes of the blind, actually opening the ears of the deaf; it usually involves people testifying that they have been miraculously healed. It has not taken place when someone simply claims their

healing "by faith" despite the persistence of their symptoms or when someone is pushed down.

It is possible to fail to heal the sick as Jesus commanded his disciples. Many have tried to heal the sick, but failed. Perhaps you once tried to heal someone of a headache. You laid your hand on her head and rebuked the pain in Jesus' name. Then you asked her how she felt. After a moment's pause, she admitted to you that the pain had actually gotten worse after you laid your hand on her. You still recall how you felt when you failed. It was embarrassing and made you look bad. Imagine how you would have felt if this had happened in front of a crowd of unbelievers as you were preaching the gospel to them.

Healing the sick, therefore, is fraught with the risk of failure. It doesn't always "work." *You* are the one who is healing the sick in Jesus' name, and therefore *you* have a measure of responsibility in determining the outcome. When nothing happens, part of the reason for the failure could be *you*. Therefore it is much easier and less nerve-wracking to pray for the sick than to heal the sick as Jesus commanded his disciples.

The great contrast between the two explains why the Church rarely heals the sick, but instead prefers to pray for the sick. Of course, much of the Church is not even aware that they have been given authority to heal the sick. Those who are aware of this authority are generally hesitant to use it because of doubt and fear that nothing will happen if they try. Instead, they will "commit the infirm one to the hands of our all compassionate, omniscient, and omnipotent Father in heaven for Him to heal according to His will and His time, for His glory forever and ever, in Jesus' name, amen." This sounds very spiritual indeed. But in the gospels did Jesus ever command his disciples to pray for the sick? The answer is no, he did not. Sometimes our high-sounding prayers for the infirm can be just a cover-up for the fear and doubt that paralyze us from obeying the Lord's command to heal the sick.

Preach the gospel and healing people everywhere

Luke 9:6 So they set out and went from village to village, *preaching the gospel and healing people* everywhere.

Preaching the gospel and healing the sick are a single package. God created human beings in such a way that they are drawn to the miraculous. For those who do not know the invisible God in heaven who alone can forgive sin and save from condemnation in hell, miracles can open their eyes to His existence and to His love. This is especially true of billions of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and those who believe in witchcraft around the world. These gospel-resistant peoples are increasing in numbers in the United States---formerly known as a "Christian" country.

John 4:48 "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

Heal the sick, Raise the dead, Cast out Demons

Matthew 10:1 And when He had called to Him His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal *all* kinds of sickness and *all* kinds of disease.

Matthew here records the same episode as recorded by Luke when Jesus called the twelve disciples to himself. These twelve disciples, who were also known as the original apostles, were given authority to heal all kinds of sickness and disease. It is thus not unreasonable to conclude that apostles may have a very high level of authority to heal the sick---a degree of authority that not all disciples have been given.

7 And as you go, proclaim, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.
8 *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.*

Again we note that just as recorded in Luke 9, Jesus did not command his disciples to pray for the sick, but rather to heal the sick. The commands Jesus gave to the *twelve apostles* included not only healing the sick and casting out demons, but also the special category of raising the dead. The high level of authority given to apostles may include the authority *to raise the dead*.

What the Great Commission tells us to do

It is beyond argument that Jesus commanded his disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God, to heal the sick and cast out demons. His final command to his disciples before returning to heaven after his resurrection is found in Matthew 28, also known as the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

What did Jesus clearly command his disciples to do, among other things?

- to proclaim the kingdom of God,
- and *to heal the sick*.

Therefore in accordance with Matthew 28:20 we must today teach the disciples of Jesus Christ how to proclaim the kingdom of God and how to heal the sick and cast out demons. Sadly, the Church has failed to teach believers to obey the command of Christ regarding healing the sick and casting out demons. This is not simply for

pastors, leaders, evangelists, and missionaries, but for every disciple of Jesus Christ. Every believer is called to be a witness of Christ.

Why are miraculous healings rare in the Church today?

The primary reason why miraculous healings are rare today is because the Church has not been taught and thus failed to obey Christ's command to heal the sick as He did.

What about disciples who are not apostles?

Few believers are apostles. Most are nameless but committed disciples of Jesus Christ. We note that in Luke 9 and Matthew 10, Jesus specifically gave power and authority over diseases and demons to the twelve apostles. Therefore it is reasonable to ask whether or not "ordinary" disciples of Christ have been given any such power and authority.

Luke 10:1 After this the Lord appointed *seventy others* and *sent them* two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

We see Jesus appointing seventy "ordinary" disciples who were not apostles, and then sending them to proclaim the kingdom of God in places he would later visit. When he sent them out, did he give these nameless disciples any power and authority over diseases and demons?

Luke 10:9 *Heal the sick* who are there and tell them, '*The kingdom of God is near you.*'

Jesus commanded the seventy to heal the sick when he sent them out. If he commanded them to heal the sick, it is obvious that he also gave them a measure of authority to heal the sick as well. We conclude that authority over diseases was also given to these seventy non-apostles when they were sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

It is the Lord's will to heal the sick when the gospel is being proclaimed

There are times when a believer, about to minister healing to an infirm person, experiences doubt regarding God's will to heal that person. When doubt is present, the exercise of authority can be adversely affected and the person might not be healed. How do we deal with the very valid issue of God's will with regard to the healing a certain individual? If it is not God's will to heal that person, then probably nothing will happen.

When we are proclaiming the kingdom of God to the lost, Scripture in fact reassures us that it is indeed God's will to perform miraculous healings.

Luke 10:9 *Heal the sick* who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'

When the Lord tells us to heal the sick, it is more than obvious to conclude that it is His will for the sick to be healed. The key here is the context of telling the lost about the kingdom of God. When we are engaged in sharing the gospel, we need not have doubt about God's will to heal. In this context, *the Lord's will in general is to heal the sick.*

...17 The seventy returned with joy and said, "Lord, *even the demons submit to us* in your name."

When Jesus sent the seventy disciples on their short-term mission trip, he not only gave them authority over diseases, he also gave them authority over demons as well. This was evident when demons they encountered on their trip obeyed their commands when rebuked in Jesus' name.

Conclusion

Regarding the question of whether or not ordinary disciples have been given authority over diseases and demons, what conclusion do we draw?

The Twelve were given power and authority over disease and demons when Jesus *sent them out* to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Similarly, the Seventy were also given a measure of this power and authority when they *were sent out*. We conclude that *a measure* of power and authority over disease and demons was given to *whomever the Lord sent out* to proclaim the kingdom of God to the lost. Since every disciple of Jesus Christ is sent out to the world as a witness, we conclude that every disciple of Christ today has been given *a measure* of this power and authority.

Why only *a measure* of power and authority?

We do not believe that every believer has been given the same measure of power and authority over diseases and demons. In particular, apostles may have a greater degree or level of this power and authority. However, as we shall see later, authority from the Lord can be compared to talents given to a servant by his master. If we are faithful to use whatever level of authority we have been given to extend the kingdom of God on earth, greater authority will be entrusted to us. We may be promoted in the army of God and to a position of greater authority. Our authority over diseases and demons will increase.

Authority over Diseases is Different from the Gift of Healing

There are at least four important differences between the authority to heal and the gift of healing as taught in 1 Corinthians 12. These two methods of healing the sick are not to be confused or confounded.

The first difference involves the *time* at which each was made available to the disciples. The authority to heal was given in the time of the gospels---well before Jesus' death and resurrection and before the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit, who brought the nine gifts of the Spirit and made them available to the Church, did not come until the Day of Pentecost. Thus the authority to heal predated the gift of healing. The authority to heal is more basic and foundational than the gift of healing.

The second difference involves the *function* of the authority as contrasted with the *function* of the gift. We have seen that Jesus gave the authority to heal to his disciples for the express purpose of proclaiming the kingdom of God to the lost and demonstrating to them that he was in fact the promised Messiah. Thus the authority to heal was given for the purpose of evangelism in the gospels. The gift of healing, by contrast, was given only beginning on the Day of Pentecost at which time it is generally acknowledged that the Church was formally born. The gift of healing was then made available to minister healing to the believers who would now constitute the Church. The gift of healing was given to build up the Church. Having made clear the difference between the authority and the gift, we must also add that there is much overlap between the two. The authority to heal can certainly be used to minister to infirm believers.

The third difference concerns to whom the authority and the gift are given. According to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:30 ("Do all have gifts of healing?") not every believer has been given the gift of healing. But we have seen that every believer has been given a measure of authority over disease and demons because every believer is called to be a witness of Christ. Every believer is sent out to those around him to share Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The fourth and final difference to be discussed here involves the operation of the authority as opposed to the operation of the gift of healing. As we shall see later, the way in which they operate through believers is very different. The use of authority involves commanding and is a kingly action. By contrast, the gift of healing may involve priestly actions.

Why do we Fail to Heal the Sick?

Some believers have attempted to heal the sick as Jesus commanded his disciples, but more often than not have experienced embarrassing failure. Usually nothing happens. Does Scripture give us a possible reason for this? Yes, Scripture records incidents where the disciples failed to obey the commands of the Lord. One of them involved a boy who suffered from severe epilepsy. Just before this incident, Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John.

Matthew 17:14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but *they could not heal him.*"

The boy was afflicted with severe epilepsy. His father brought him to Jesus' disciples, but they failed to heal the boy. In other words, they failed to perform the miracle of driving out the demon and healing the boy of his affliction. Jesus' reaction to the news about his disciples' failure to perform the miracle was both amazing and revealing.

17 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?"

Jesus was very displeased with his disciples and reproached them severely. Today some might label his words offensive. What did the disciples do to deserve such harsh words? They were not guilty of some moral failure like adultery or lying or greed. All they did was fail to perform the miracle of driving out the demon. For this Jesus was very disappointed with them. He uttered words that no pastor or Christian leader would ever say to a believer whose only shortcoming was failure to drive out a demon or heal the sick.

An illustration

Let's say that you are an elder in your church. One day your pastor receives a call from an unchurched family in the community. They have a child who has been bedridden for weeks. The doctors have performed all kinds of tests and treatments but are unable to help the child. The parents call your church and ask for help from God. Your pastor, seeing an opportunity to win a family to Jesus Christ, summons you and asks you to go minister to the sick child. His hope is that when the child is healed, the parents will start coming to church.

You visit the family and lay hands on the child. But---as is usually the case---nothing happens. There is no apparent change and the child remains bedridden. You return to your church to report to your pastor. When you step into his office, he looks up at you with anticipation and says, "Praise the Lord! What happened?"

You reply, "Pastor, nothing happened yet. Who do you think I am, God? These things always take time. Perhaps next week the child will be better."

Would your pastor suddenly frown and say, "You unbelieving and perverse elder. How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Get out of my office"?

No pastor or leader would ever say such a thing to a believer who had failed to heal an infirmity or cast out a demon. It is offensive. Moreover, the pastor would lose your offerings if because you are offended you decided to leave and go to another church. (That would really hurt.) So how can we reasonably explain Jesus' words and behavior?

Was Jesus tired and irritable?

Perhaps Jesus was exhausted after descending all the way down from the Mount of Transfiguration where he had been earlier that day. He was hungry, and so he reacted irritably when he heard what the boy's father said to him. Is that a possible explanation for Jesus' behavior? No.

What would a leader not respond in the way that Jesus did? We would not because Christians are taught to be "nice" and gentle to others. But there is a far more basic reason why we would not. It has to do with our *theology*. The theology of the Church tells us that we are completely helpless---especially in the realm of the supernatural---and can do nothing except to pray and trust and wait on God. This is what every believer has essentially been taught for hundreds of years, perhaps since the time of Augustine who is recognized by Christians as the father of modern theology.

But it is evident that Jesus' theology was not consistent with ours. His reproach of the disciples showed that he *expected* and even *demand*ed his disciples to perform the miracle successfully.

How could Jesus have possibly expected his disciples to perform the miracle?

There are three simple reasons.

- They were his disciples and he was training them to do what he did as they followed him. As Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons, his disciples were observing him and learning from him. They called him "Teacher."
- He had given them authority to heal the sick and cast out demons.
- He had sent them out and commanded them to heal the sick.

Based upon these three reasons, Jesus was completely justified in his disappointment and anger at his disciples. Now we must ask ourselves, "does the Lord expect us his present-day disciples to heal the sick as he expected of his disciples two thousand years ago when he sent them out to proclaim the gospel?" If we are honest with ourselves, the answer can only be "yes."

Bring the boy here to me."

Since the disciples were unable to help the boy, Jesus---we can imagine with a trace of impatience in his voice---took matters into his own hands.

18 Jesus *rebuked* the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "*Why couldn't we drive it out?*"

This disciples, stung by their failure and Jesus' rebuke, wanted to know why they could not drive out the demon. When we fail to heal the sick and nothing happens, we usually do not ask why we failed. This is because we do not really expect anything to happen. But the disciples had a degree expectation that they could set the boy free. When the boy was not healed, they were puzzled and asked Jesus the reason for their failure. The answer Jesus would give them is most significant for us because it is one reason why we fail to heal the sick today as we share the gospel to the lost. Before we examine Jesus' answer, however, let us consider the reasons that we usually give to explain why the sick are not healed when we minister to them.

Our four favorite explanations

There are *four reasons* we give to explain why the infirm are not healed:

1. The most common explanation is that it is not God's will to heal the infirm person.
2. We say that it might not be God's time to heal the person.
3. We say that the sick person has sin which keeps God from healing him.
4. We say that the sick person lacks faith

Some of these reasons might sometimes be valid. For example, if a believer has sin which he is not willing to confess and from which he is not willing to repent, it might not be God's will to heal him. (James 5:16)

However, let us consider the following. When we say that a person is not healed because it's not God's will or it's not God's time, we are essentially "blaming" God. If we attribute the lack of miraculous healing to the infirm person's sin or lack of faith, then we are essentially "blaming" the sick person. Therefore we end up either blaming God or blaming the infirm person when nothing happens after we minister. This is effectively what we are doing when we limit our explanations to the four

reasons above. Not surprisingly, given human nature, we almost never blame ourselves when nothing happens after we minister. Like Adam and Eve in the garden explaining their failure before God, we always look for someone else to blame.

What reason did Jesus give in this particular situation to explain why the miracle did not take place?

20 He replied, "Because you have *so little faith*.

According to Jesus, it was the fault of the disciples that the boy was not healed---they had such little faith. It had nothing to do with God's will or time or the boy's sin or lack of faith. It is probable that the boy did have sin in his life, but according to Jesus that was not the reason why he was not healed.

Therefore we should not always blame God or the sick person when the healing fails to materialize. It could sometimes or even often be our fault---because of our little faith. Let us keep in mind that the disciples failed not because they lacked authority. Jesus had already given them sufficient authority over disease and demons. From this we understand that authority by itself is insufficient to heal the sick. It must be accompanied by *faith*. Let us examine what kind of faith they lacked. In his reply Jesus went on to specify exactly what he meant.

Mountain-moving faith

I tell you the truth, if you have faith as a mustard seed, *you can say to this mountain*, 'Move from here to there' and *it will move*. Nothing will be impossible for you.

According to Jesus, the disciples lacked faith as a mustard seed, or "mountain-moving faith." If they had this kind of faith, they could speak to a mountain and command it to move. The mountain would obey them. The demon would have obeyed them and left the boy. And nothing would be impossible for them. It was because they lacked mountain-moving faith that they failed to drive the demon out of the boy. Jesus had already given them authority over the demon. Their mistake was in *failing to exercise that authority with mountain-moving faith*. Authority by itself is not enough. Authority must be accompanied by and exercised with mountain-moving faith.

We will now focus on the nature of mountain-moving faith. It is clear that the disciples did not have sufficient mountain-moving faith to drive out the demon. Jesus revealed to them that their failure was due to "little" mountain-moving faith. They needed more of this faith; they needed to increase in this kind of faith. In the next verse, which does not appear in some versions of the Bible, Jesus taught them a way by which they could increase in mountain-moving faith.

21 But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

The importance of prayer and fasting

Some interpret this verse to mean that the only way to deal with the demon was through prayer and fasting, not by the use of authority and commanding. I do not believe this is the correct interpretation. Nowhere do we see in New Testament Scripture a demon cast out by prayer and fasting alone, either by Jesus or the disciples. In each case of a demon being driven out, a command was given or an authoritative word was spoken. Following sound principles of Bible interpretation, we must interpret the verse in a way which is consistent with this.

Jesus taught and commanded his disciples to cast out demons. There were two essential ingredients for doing this: authority and mountain-moving faith. They failed because they lacked sufficient mountain-moving faith. Therefore the proper interpretation of the verse is that greater mountain-moving faith can come through prayer and fasting.

There are various kinds of fasting in addition to total fasting, including fasting from certain kinds of food. Daniel fasted in this way as we read in Daniel 10:3. Moreover, fasting is also good for your physical body and your health. Although our primary purpose is not to teach prayer and fasting, these are important for those who want to minister in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Introducing Mountain-Moving Faith

Luke 7:1 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6 So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. **But say the word,** and my servant will be healed.

8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.

The centurion had authority over the soldiers under his command. Let's see in what way he understood the nature of authority.

I tell this one, 'Go,' **and he goes;** and that one, 'Come,' **and he comes.** I say to my servant, 'Do this,' **and he does it."**

What exactly is the point the centurion is making here? The point is that he has *no doubt whatsoever* that the men under his authority will in fact do what he commands them to do. That is the nature of authority. When he commands them to march, he knows without a shadow of doubt that they will in fact obey him and march. When he summons a servant, the servant will of course come immediately. When he commands a soldier to attack an enemy, he knows that the soldier will obey and attack. The centurion understood the nature of authority: whatever is under one's authority **must** obey one's commands. There was no (or extremely little) possibility that the soldiers would not obey his commands, and the centurion was supremely confident of that. It is clear from his words that the centurion had *no doubt* that his men would in fact obey his commands.

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, **I have not found such great faith even in Israel."**

Jesus was absolutely amazed at the faith of the centurion, declaring that he had not encountered such faith anywhere in Israel. What kind of unusual faith did the centurion have that Jesus had not seen anywhere else?

Of course the centurion had faith that Jesus could heal his servant. But this was no different from the several infirm or demonized people recorded in the gospels who came to Jesus with faith to be healed by him. For example, the woman with the bleeding who touched Jesus' cloak was healed by her faith in Jesus (Mark 5:34).

But the centurion as described here *had another dimension* to his faith: he had *no doubt* that the soldiers under his authority would obey his commands. And since Jesus had authority over infirmities and demons, he could of course rebuke and issue commands to infirmities and they would in fact obey him. Jesus could command the servant to be healed even at a distance from the house, and he in fact would be healed. The centurion understood all this because he understood authority.

Therefore what kind of unusual faith did the centurion have? He had *faith without a doubt*. The mountain-moving faith taught by Jesus in Matthew 17:20 is none other than **faith-without-a-doubt**.

10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

The consequence of doubt: Peter attempting to walk on water

Matthew 14:28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "**why did you doubt?**"

Jesus commanded Peter to "come"---to walk on water. Peter tried, but ended up failing and sinking. Why did Peter fail? The reason was because he *doubted* that he could in fact walk on water as Jesus commanded. While we will develop this much more in a later chapter, we now see that doubt in our heart can cause us to fail to do what Jesus commands us to do, especially in the realm of the supernatural.

To reinforce the importance and necessity of resisting doubt in our hearts, let's take a peek at the next chapter of this Manual where we will study mountain-moving faith in greater depth.

Mark 11:23 "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and **does not doubt in their heart** but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.

Now let's study the incident from which this verse is taken---where Jesus curses the fig tree.

Exactly what is Mountain-Moving Faith?

We know that mountain-moving faith must work alongside authority in order for a demon to be cast out or an infirm person to be healed. Authority over disease and demons has already been given to believers for the primary purpose of sharing the gospel of the kingdom to the lost. Therefore let us focus on the other important variable known as mountain-moving faith. Exactly what is the nature of mountain-moving faith?

Mark 11:12 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he *said to the tree*, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

Jesus talks to a tree

Jesus does something unusual by most standards, even church standards. He talks to a tree in the hearing of his disciples. For obvious reasons, most people do not speak to trees, let alone allow others to see them engaged in such behavior. Exactly what did Jesus say to the tree?

He spoke to the fig tree and cursed it. Essentially, he commanded it to wither and die. Note that he did not pray to the Father and ask Him to curse the tree. No, the Father had given him authority over the tree, so He could perform the action himself by a command to the tree. What was the immediate result of Jesus speaking to the fig tree?

...20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

A powerful miracle took place. The fig tree withered. It heard the words that Jesus spoke to it and obeyed his command.

21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you *cursed* has withered!"

Peter was clearly impressed. He was the one disciple who had a special interest in the miracles that he saw Jesus performing. In an incident recorded in Matthew 14, Peter and the other disciples were in a boat on the sea when they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. In that incident Peter was the only one who was interested in performing the miracle of walking on water as Jesus had done.

When Peter saw what Jesus had done to the fig tree, he was amazed and likely was interested in understanding how Jesus had done it. Exactly how did Jesus curse the

fig tree with the use of authority? In his reply in the next verse, Jesus reveals exactly how he exercised his authority over the tree to cause it to wither.

22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered.

According to the original Greek manuscript, there is an alternative English translation for Jesus' answer, and it is equally valid.

22 "Have faith of God," Jesus answered.

The Modern King James Version, Young's Literal Translation and the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible all render Jesus' answer as "have faith of God." This translation makes far more sense in the context of the incident than does the traditional translation. It is very likely that Jesus in his answer to Peter was teaching him how he had performed the miracle on the fig tree using his authority. While no one will argue about the paramount importance of having "faith in God," it is vague and not very helpful in understanding *how Jesus cursed the fig tree*.

However, "have faith *of* God" offers a rich understanding as to how Jesus performed the miracle. When Jesus exercised his authority over the tree, he did it with faith *of* God.

Faith *of* God

In the next verse, Jesus goes on to explain the nature of "faith of God."

23 "I tell you the truth, *if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,'*

These words are familiar to us. They take us back to the incident where Jesus had reproached his disciples for failing to heal a boy of epilepsy. They had failed because of their *little faith*. The kind of faith referred to by Jesus here was "faith as a mustard seed," or if you will recall, mountain-moving faith. In verse 23 above, Jesus is again speaking of mountain-moving faith. Faith *of* God, therefore, is for all practical purposes identical to mountain-moving faith. Jesus goes on to specify the nature of mountain-moving faith, or essentially the nature of faith *of* God.

and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Faith *of* God therefore consists of two ingredients:

- No doubt in our hearts
- Believing that what we say must be done

If you disagree with the use of the term “faith of God,” then let us simply use “mountain-moving faith” instead. For us these two terms are interchangeable for purposes related to healing the sick and casting out demons.

Five Illustrations of “Faith of God”

To understand clearly the nature of faith of God, we will look at five illustrations.

How would God move a mountain apart from the hand of man?

God would not pray. Since He is the Most High, there is no one to whom He can pray. He would rather speak to the mountain and command it to move. He might say, as in Mark 11:23, “Be moved and be cast into the sea.”

Mark 11:22 And answering Jesus said to them, “Have faith of God. 23 For truly I say to you that whoever shall say to this mountain, ‘Be moved and be cast into the sea,’

When God commands the mountain to move, does He entertain any doubt in His heart that the mountain will obey Him? Is He at all fearful that the mountain might not move? Does He really believe that the mountain will obey Him?

and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he said shall occur, he shall have whatever he said.” (MKJV)

No, He entertains not the slightest doubt or fear that the mountain will obey Him. *Why not?*

God has no doubt because as the Most High God He has authority over the mountain. Since it is under His authority, it will of course obey His command. Therefore when God speaks to the mountain, He commands it with mountain-moving faith, or *faith of God*. And the mountain obeys His command. We see therefore that faith of God is related to authority. When we understand that we have authority over something, we can give a command to that thing with no fear or doubt---with faith of God.

“Let there be light”

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, “Let there be light.” God essentially spoke and commanded the light to appear. Let’s say for the sake of argument that there were angels present at that moment. When God commanded, “Let there be light,” did He have any doubt at all that the light would in fact obey His command and appear? Was He concerned that if the light did not appear, He might be embarrassed in front of the angels? No, God had no doubt at all. *Why not?*

God had no doubt the light would appear because He knew He had authority over the light, and that it would most certainly obey His command. Therefore when He said, “Let there be light,” He spoke it forth with faith of God. The understanding of

authority over something gives rise to faith of God and enables us to command that thing with total confidence.

Jesus cursing the fig tree

When Jesus cursed the fig tree in front of his disciples, did he doubt that the miracle would take place? Was he concerned that if the tree did not wither, his disciples might be disappointed and might leave him? No, Jesus had no doubt that the fig tree would wither. *Why not?*

Jesus had no doubt because he knew that the Father had given him authority over the tree. Because the tree was subject to his authority, it would have no choice but to obey his command. With this understanding of his authority over the tree, he could command it to wither with *faith of God*, without any wavering, uncertainty or hesitation.

Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead

When Jesus stood before the tomb containing the corpse of Lazarus, he was accompanied by the sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, as well as some Jews (John 11). He spoke forth a command, saying, "Lazarus, come out!" When Jesus uttered the words, did he have doubt that the dead man would come back to life? Was he afraid that if this extraordinary miracle did not come to pass, that Mary and Martha would no longer believe in him and that he would embarrass himself in front of the Jews? No, there was no doubt. *Why not?*

Jesus had no doubt that the dead man would obey his command because he knew that the Father had given him authority to raise the dead (John 5:21). Because of this authority Jesus could issue the command with faith of God. One can issue a command to something with faith of God---with great confidence and without any wavering---if we know that we have been given authority over that thing.

Telling your dog to "sit"

Let's say that you have raised your dog Tuffy since he was a puppy. You have spent a small fortune sending him to obedience school. One evening in your home you are holding a Bible study teaching a group of believers about the nature of authority. Suddenly Tuffy walks into the room. You decide to use Tuffy as an illustration of how to exercise authority. In front of the people, you say, "Tuffy, come here." He obediently trots over to you and waits at your feet. Then you say to him, "SIT." Do you have doubt in your heart that Tuffy will obey your command in front of all the people? Do you harbor a tormenting fear that Tuffy will disobey your command and ruin your illustration, not to mention embarrass you in front of the people? No, of course you don't. *Why not?*

You have no doubt that Tuffy will sit and that he will in fact do what you say because you know your authority over him. With this authority, you can issue the command to him with faith of God---with no doubt, with complete confidence and assurance and without any wavering. What if Tuffy is stubborn at that moment and doesn't sit? Will you cry out to Jesus to help you? No, you will simply repeat the command with even greater force and you might even reach out your hand to force him to sit. One way or another, he is going to submit to your command.

Here is an illustration of issuing the command to your dog *without* faith of God. It's exaggerated and dramatized, but you will get the point.

Tuffy is standing before you wagging his tail. He is waiting for your authoritative command. But you get down on your knees before him, and say as sweetly as possible, "Good dog, Tuffy. I love you, and Jesus does too. Hallelujah." You beg him, "would you please sit, Tuffy?" Then you look up to heaven. "Jesus, help me! I can do nothing, but nothing is impossible for you. Please make my dog sit. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Father." You follow that up with a healthy burst of unknown tongues. Then you turn your attention back to Tuffy. "Nice dog, Tuffy, if you don't mind, would you please sit?"

It is clear that Tuffy will not sit, although you have authority over him. When you issue the command to him in such a spineless way, he does not understand what you want him to do. Since you doubt that you can make Tuffy sit, you cry out to Jesus for his help; you speak to God in unknown tongues. Since you have doubt, it is clear that you lack faith of God when you issue the command. As a result, nothing happens. Tuffy just wags his tail and licks your face.

Unfortunately, this is how many believers attempt to heal the sick and cast out demons. They do not understand how to give commands with faith of God, instead they mix and confound praying and commanding. They cry out to Jesus and give thanks to God hoping that this will prompt Him to act. Charismatic believers may in addition speak in unknown tongues. It is clear that such believers are not properly trained and that they have doubt. It is not surprising why the infirmity or the demon does not obey them, and they fail.

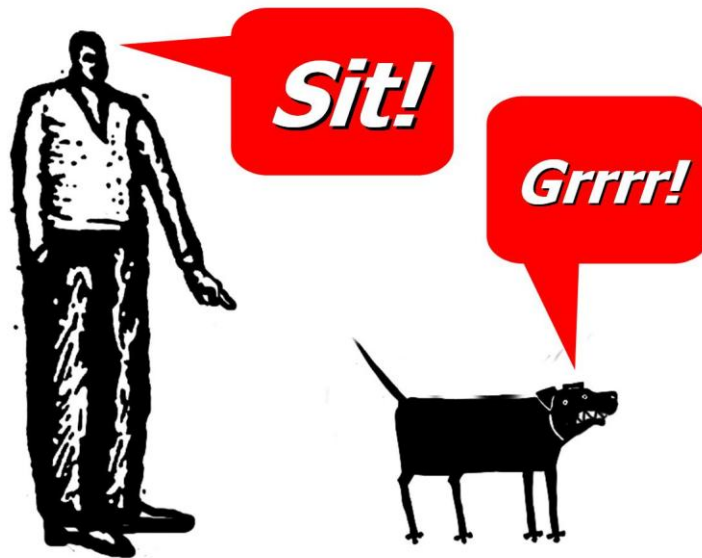
The same principles apply when commanding your five-year-old boy to stop beating his little sister. You don't get down on your knees as if you have no authority over him. You don't speak to him sweetly and gently. You don't cry out to Jesus for help and you don't speak in tongues. You stand over your little boy with eyes wide open and command him to stop with *authority* and *faith of God*---with no doubt in your heart. He *must* do what you say. You may even physically restrain him if necessary. Whatever the case, you will make him stop beating his little sister. He is under your authority.

Now something on the light side for you....

This is how we would like demons and diseases to obey us in the context of evangelism. The dog in the cartoon is representative of them.



But often this is what we really see happening....





Demons and diseases, of course, are not quite in the same category as our dog and our children. Our pets usually obey us willingly. But, for the sake of the gospel, demons and diseases can be considered the work of the enemy. They are essentially in rebellion to God's rule and authority, and do not submit to us willingly. We must *force* them out with the authority given to us by the Lord. That often involves rebuking and commanding with holy anger and indignation.

When I teach, I often use the expression "like a mother bear robbed of her cubs" to describe the kind of attitude that we must have towards diseases and demons when we speak to them. Imagine if a home invader breaks down your front door and threatens your wife and children. You would take violent action to protect your loved ones. That is how we speak to and rebuke diseases and demons. It's the only language that they understand---overwhelming force resulting from the combination of authority and faith of God.

So why did the disciples fail to cast out the demon?

When someone---like a military commander---gives a command to *someone who is under his authority*, he utters the command *with no doubt* or fear of being rejected. Because he has been given authority in that realm, *he believes that what he says will happen*.

Disciples of Jesus Christ who are sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God *have been given authority over disease and demons*. (We are not suggesting here that believers have all authority like God Himself. Rather, believers only have the authority that God gives us to fulfill the purpose assigned to us.) When in this evangelistic context we command diseases and demons to go in Christ's name, *we speak with faith of God*, without doubt or fear of failure.

Authority over diseases and demons must be exercised with faith of God or mountain-moving faith. The consequence of lack of faith could be failure.

Now we understand why the disciples failed to drive out the demon. According to Jesus, they lacked mountain-moving faith when they confronted the demon; in other words, they lacked faith of God. Demons which can cause severe epilepsy can be intimidating to the inexperienced disciple. They have the power physically to throw their victim down to the ground where they convulse uncontrollably like a fish out of water. When the disciples heard about the impressive power of the demon from the boy's father, it is possible that doubt surfaced in their minds. They wondered whether or not they would be able to drive it out and heal the boy. But at the request of the boy's father, they decided to "try."

When they approached the boy and issued commands to the demon, they had doubt in their hearts that the demon would in fact obey them. They didn't really believe that the demon would leave. They wavered and failed to issue the command to the demon with confidence, conviction, and assurance. The demon could sense their lack of faith in their demeanor and in the tone of their voices as they attempted to rebuke him. What was the result? *The demon refused to obey their commands to leave*.

Here is a slightly dramatized example of exhibiting doubt and lack of faith when trying to heal the sick or cast out a demon from someone:

You approach the infirm person without any confidence that anything will happen. You are just hoping that Jesus will somehow show up and a great miracle will happen. Let's say that the person needs physical healing. You lay hands on the infirm person and close your eyes, thinking that closing your eyes somehow will bring God's healing power into manifestation. You feel you really need God's help to heal the person, so automatically you call upon His name:

"Father, in the name of Jesus, I rebuke this infirmity and command it to go."

First mistake: If you want to heal the sick, you should be speaking directly to the infirmity and commanding it to leave. Why are you first talking to the Father? Does it actually make any sense to tell the Father what you want the infirmity to do?

Then you turn your attention back to the Lord in heaven. You say to Him, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Holy Spirit. Thank you, Father."

Second mistake: Why are you thanking God when you should be speaking directly to the infirmity and commanding it to be healed in Jesus' name? Might you be trying to "bribe" God by being nice to Him and thanking Him, hoping that He will be pleased to show up and perform a great miracle?

Then you turn back to the infirmity which is supposed to be under your authority. You force out through your lips the words, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus Christ." But you can barely keep the shaking in your voice from surfacing. You are wondering to yourself if anything is actually happening, or if are you just making a fool of yourself in front of the infirm person and whoever else is present.

Third mistake: The tone of your voice and words betrays the fear and doubt in your heart.

You blurt out, "Help me, Jesus. I can do nothing. But nothing is impossible for you. Please help me." You then take a moment to praise and worship Him.

Fourth mistake: By crying to Jesus for help, you have revealed to everyone, including the infirmity, that you doubt that you can drive out the infirmity and that you need the Lord's help.

If you are a believer of the charismatic or Pentecostal persuasion, about this time you might be speaking in unknown tongues.

Fifth mistake: If a believer speaks in other tongues, he is speaking to God (1 Corinthians 14:2). Why are you speaking to God when you should be speaking directly to the infirmity and commanding it to leave? Does the infirmity understand what you are saying when you speak in other tongues?

Charismatic believers have been taught that "when in doubt, speak in tongues." But what does it say to the demon or infirmity when you speak in tongues as you attempt to drive it out? The fear and doubt in your heart has been exposed through the words of your mouth (Matthew 12:34).

Then you turn your attention back to the infirm person. "Father, nothing is impossible for you. Be healed in the name of Jesus."

Sixth mistake: Why are you reminding the Father that nothing is impossible for Him? Of course God is able to heal the person. But it is you whom God wants to use to heal the person. When you mix praying and commanding in this way, you are simply uncovering the doubt in your heart that you are able to heal the person and

thus your need for God's help. Under such circumstances, the disease or demon will not obey your command.

When Jesus healed the sick, he never mixed and confounded praying and commanding in the way many believers do today when they attempt to heal the sick. We shall see later as we study the book of Acts that the disciples also never mixed praying and commanding when they ministered to the infirm. If and when they did pray, they kept the prayer separate and distinct from the command. Why is it important to understand this?

Praying is an activity of the priestly office, while commanding is an action of the kingly office. One cannot operate in both at the same time. Priestly actions are directed *up* to God, while kingly actions are directed *down* to those things which are under our authority. It is impossible to go up and down at the same time. One should not speak to God and to diseases and demons in the same breath. It is not scriptural. Unfortunately believers have not been taught this principle and so they combine praying and commanding when they attempt to heal the sick or cast out demons. When they do, more often than not they will fail.

How do you command your dog to sit?

Here we repeat the teaching from an earlier chapter to reinforce an important principle. Commanding an infirmity or a demon to leave should be similar to commanding your dog to sit. As you are commanding him to sit, you do not talk to the Lord and tell Him how helpless you are and that you need His help in making your dog sit. If you are a charismatic believer, you do not speak in unknown tongues. You do not say, "Thank you, Jesus." You do not close your eyes. You do not pause to praise and worship God. You do not intersperse kingly actions commanding your dog to sit with priestly ones asking God for help and thanking Him. However, if you *do* perform those actions, your dog will likely be confused and not understand what you are saying to him. He will not sit. So how do you make your dog sit? You simply fix your eyes on your dog and with no hint of wavering or uncertainty utter a sharp command: "SIT." And he obeys you.

Issuing a command to an infirmity is in principle the same as commanding your dog to sit. If you know how to command your dog to sit, you will be able to heal the sick in the name of Jesus Christ.

What if your dog doesn't obey your command to sit?

If Tuffy stands there defiantly and refuses to sit, do you cry out to God for His help? Do you panic and allow fear to overwhelm you? Do you speak in tongues? No. You will feel indignation rise within yourself. You repeat the command to Tuffy a second time with much greater force. If need be, you can even physically force him to sit. *You mean business.* You will make sure that he obeys your command; you will

make sure that he understands “who’s boss.” And in the end Tuffy sits as you commanded him.

This is how a disciple of Jesus Christ deals with diseases and demons as he proclaims the kingdom of God to the lost. He must exercise his authority by giving commands with no doubt in his heart and with faith of God.

Authority and mountain-moving faith

Authority, which in Greek is *exousia*, can be likened to “potential energy” in a believer given by the Lord to heal the sick. But as we have seen, authority by itself is insufficient. How is this authority transformed into an actual physical healing in evangelism? It is with the use of mountain-moving faith or faith of God. Issuing a command with mountain-moving faith transforms the “potential energy” into an actual physical healing.

In some charismatic circles, there is an emphasis on seeking after what is called “the anointing.” It is taught that with “the anointing” we shall be able to perform miraculous signs to glorify God. However, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, there may be overemphasis on pursuing this anointing. We have seen that the New Testament never speaks of “the anointing” on a disciple of Jesus Christ in the sense of that disciple being empowered to heal the sick, cast out demons, or to minister to others in the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, Jesus time and time again would pointedly attribute failure on the part of his disciples to perform miracles to their *lack of faith*. In the incident involving the boy with the epileptic demon, he specifically meant “faith of God.” We shall see more examples of this in Scripture as we continue this study. It is time that we go back to the basics of Scripture. It is not a lack of “the anointing” that causes us to fail; it is simply lack of faith.

Authority vs. the gift of healing

We have been examining how authority operates in the area of healing the sick. When using authority, there is no “priestly” component, but only the “kingly.” Even in Acts, as we shall see later, the use of authority to heal by the disciples followed these same principles. However, the gift of healing operates in a markedly different manner. With the gift, prayer in various forms might be involved. There is likely a “priestly” component involving worship, praise, and thanksgiving. It is possible that charismatics and pentecostals might pray in unknown languages when ministering with the gift of healing. The use of the authority to heal and the use of the gift of healing are quite different and should not be confused with one another. This is true whether one is of the conservative evangelical tradition or the charismatic/pentecostal persuasion.

Faith *of* God and Faith *in* God

Faith *of* God, or mountain-move faith, is used in kingly actions like giving commands for the purpose of healing the infirm. The direction of faith of God is *down* in a figurative sense, since diseases and demons are *under* our authority. The nature of our relationship with them is such that we speak *down* to them. This is taught in Mark 11.

Mark 11:23 ...if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (NIV)

When we give a command to a mountain with no doubt in our heart, we are exercising faith of God.

Faith *in* God, on the other hand, is used for priestly actions within the context of our relationship with God, whether through prayer, praise, or worship. The direction of faith in God is, figuratively speaking, *up*---since God dwells in the highest heavens *above*. The very next verse from Mark 11 expresses this.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

The nature of our relationship with God above is that of absolute trust, as verse 24 above teaches.

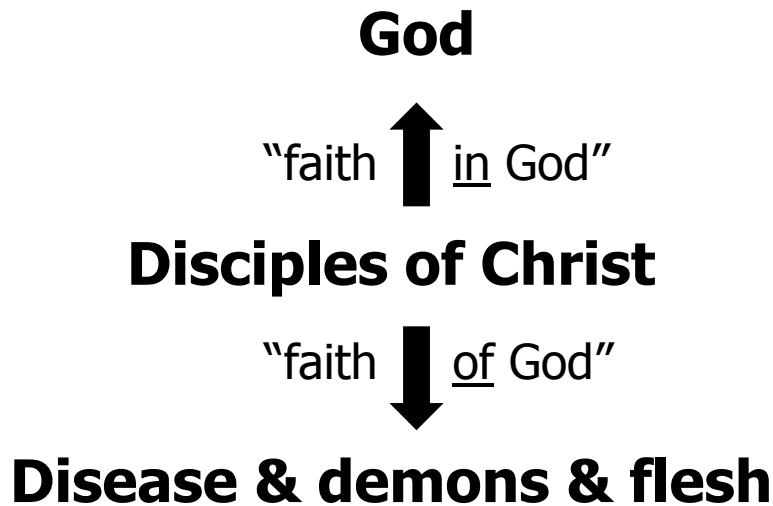
There is one more direction in which believers operate every day, and this concerns our relationship with other people. Since they live on the surface of the earth just as we do, the direction of this relationship is *horizontal*. The next verse from Mark 11 describes the nature of this relationship.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, *forgive him*, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

The Lord teaches us to relate to other people in an attitude of forgiveness.

If we are going to be fruitful in our relationship with God above and if we are going to be effective in dealing with diseases and demons which are under us, then we should be sure that we are living and breathing with this attitude of forgiveness toward other people on earth.

We are disciples of Jesus Christ on earth. God in heaven is over us. Demons, diseases, and the works of our flesh are under us. Toward God above we exercise faith *in* God. Toward demons, diseases, and the works of our flesh which are under us, we exercise faith *of* God. Toward our fellow human beings on earth, we exercise forgiveness.



Confusion regarding the priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices

These, then, are the three directions in which we operate in our three offices as disciples of Jesus Christ. The direction of the priestly office is up. The direction of the prophetic office is horizontal. The direction of the kingly office is down. If we are to operate effectively in these three offices we should be clear about their differences and what activities are appropriate for each office. For example, an activity which is called for in the priestly office will not be appropriate for the kingly office. Because of misunderstanding and confusion in the body of Christ about this, we function with impaired effectiveness in the offices. This is especially true with regard to the kingly office. This is why we are so ineffective in healing the sick and casting out demons---an activity to be performed in the kingly office.

If we are preaching the gospel and are called to heal the sick---something that we have been given authority to perform---we should move in our kingly office. But our tradition has us instead ministering in our priestly office by praying to God and asking Him to heal the sick. It is no wonder that little happens in the way of miraculous healing.

If we are called to engage in intercessory prayer to God as His priests, but as we pray to God we also give commands to powers, principalities, and angels, we are confounding the two offices of the priestly and the kingly. Scripture does not *explicitly* teach that we have been given authority over such spirit beings. Although there are verses that may *imply* we have such authority, there is no record in Scripture of Jesus or any of his disciples ever performing such an action. As we shall see later, it can even be dangerous to issue a command to a hostile spirit being over which we have not been given any authority. Seen in this light, the term

“warfare prayer” may be self-contradictory. How can one conduct war against the enemy and pray to the Lord at the very same time? These are two very different activities, and are aimed in opposite directions. (By raising this matter, we are of course not endorsing the practice of directly rebuking what are known as territorial spirits.)

Comparing the three offices of the Church

The priestly office (as opposed to the prophetic and kingly) is primarily for ministering directly to the Lord in prayer, worship, and thanksgiving. Ministering to the Lord is a most important function. However, if believers spend all their time in church gatherings ministering to the Lord, will the Great Commission be fulfilled? No.

The prophetic office is primarily for ministering to the body of Christ---for the strengthening, encouragement, and comfort of the Church. It is for speaking forth the word of God to others. It is obviously an important office. However, if disciples of Christ concentrate all their efforts in church gatherings performing this office, will the work of the Great Commission be completed? No.

The kingly office is the third and final office in which the body of Christ needs to function as God intended. It is the least understood and most neglected of the three. Its function as understood in this Manual is primarily for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It is for destroying the works of the enemy: healing the sick, casting out demons, and proclaiming the kingdom of God to the lost *who are found outside the four walls of the Church*.

Discipleship of new believers must include teaching them to function in all three of the offices.

Demonstration: Healing an Infirmary

You are now going to apply what you have been learning. We strongly encourage you at this point to heal someone of their infirmity. (If you don't apply it, it will remain theory only and useless to the kingdom of God.) You will now do what Jesus did: lay hands on the person and speak forth a command in the name of Jesus Christ.

Before we go on, we must be reminded that what is being taught here is *not* a formula to be used anytime and anywhere we wish. It is *not* to be considered a formula for personal good health and long life, although there can be some personal benefits to applying the principles. Rather, it is to be used to suit the purposes of the Sovereign God in heaven. And His purpose is to save the lost and bring them to repentance. The authority to heal therefore is primarily to be used in the context of sharing the gospel to demonstrate to the lost that Jesus Christ is in fact the only Savior. You are at this moment in the process of learning how to heal the infirm for the sake of the Great Commission. Therefore we believe that it will please the Lord to teach and encourage you by healing an infirmity through you right now.

It is best, as much as possible, to limit your spoken commands according to the patterns which are found in Scripture. This is the safest and most effective rule of thumb. It is best not to "go beyond what is written." There are many instances of miraculous healings and deliverance performed by Jesus and his disciples through the use of authority which are found in the gospels and in Acts. We can follow their example.

So far we have studied four instances of miracles performed by Jesus.

"Come out of him!" (Luke 4:35)
He rebuked the fever (Luke 4:39)
"Be clean!" (Luke 5:13)
"Stretch out your hand." (Matthew 12:13)

We will see more examples when we study some miraculous healings performed by the disciples in Acts.

However, what is important are not the exact words which we use. The commands we speak forth are not legalistic mantras or rituals which must be repeated word for word into the air. What is essential is that we issue the command directly and personally to the infirmity, demon, or sick person in the name of Jesus Christ with faith of God---with no doubt and with complete confidence.

Now is the time for you to apply what has been taught so far. Find someone with a physical infirmity to heal---perhaps a family member or close friend. At this point it would be best not to attempt anything too difficult. Instead, find a "small" mountain to move, for example, a minor pain in the body. From experience we have

discovered that knee pains and arthritic pains are small mountains and not difficult to drive out.

Before you minister the healing, if you would like you can pray to the Lord and ask Him to use you to heal the infirmity. If necessary, in prayer forgive those against whom you have something and then ask Him to forgive you of your sins as well. This is when you take care of your "priestly" concerns before the Lord.

After you are done with this, take off your "priestly robe" and put on your "kingly robe." That means there will be no more prayer up to God. Get ready for action: attack and destroy the work of the enemy.

If there is no one around with pain to whom you can minister, then as a last resort you can even minister to yourself if you have pain somewhere in your body. Although of course Scripture does not record anyone ministering healing to himself, the principles of authority and the laying on of hands hold regardless of whether the pain is in someone else's body or in your own. This is especially true if you are learning these principles primarily for preaching the gospel to the lost.

The laying on of hands and the exercise of authority

Later we shall examine the scriptural basis for the laying on of hands. But for now, simply lay your hand or hands directly on the part of the body where the pain is. It is not necessary to rub, massage, squeeze, or slap the affected part of the person's body. It is not recorded that Jesus did these things. As you lay your hand on the pain, speak forth commands along the lines of the following:

"Pain, I rebuke you. Leave in the name of Jesus!"

"In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed!"

"Be restored!"

"Infirmity, leave!"

"Be set free in the name of Jesus Christ!"

"Get up and walk!"

When you issue the commands, speak directly and personally to the infirmity or person with no doubt or hesitation. It is scriptural to speak sternly, harshly, and even to raise your voice at the pain. This is what *rebuking* involves. The pain is an "enemy," and we fight our enemies with violence. It will not leave willingly; it must be *forced out* with authority and faith of God. Expect the pain to hear your word and to begin to obey it.

Then ask the person whether or not there is any change. If there was a problem with the knee, ask the person to test it by getting up and walking around. Jesus would command the infirm to "get up." If the pain is gone, you have succeeded in moving the "mountain" into the sea.

If the pain is getting less but is still present, that means it is beginning to obey your command. What should you do? Command it a second time to leave and for the person to be healed; continue to move the mountain into the sea. The pain should continue to decrease. Ask the person again about the pain. Continue until the pain is completely gone.

What if there is absolutely no change at all after you issue the first commands? This is when doubt can appear to paralyze you. This is when you are tempted to cry out to Jesus for help. This is a test for you.

Recall what you do when your dog refuses to sit at your command. You are indignant and do not accept his disobedience. You repeat the command to your dog with greater forcefulness. Eventually you will succeed in making your dog to sit. It is the same with the pain. If the pain is stubborn and refuses to leave, you will not panic and you will not accept the refusal. Instead, you sense "holy anger" at the pain. You will rebuke it again, this time more sternly and more harshly than before. The pain will "know" that you are absolutely serious and will begin to obey your command. It will decrease. As you continue to rebuke the pain and command it to leave, it will disappear completely. You have succeeded in moving the mountain into the sea. You have accomplished it with authority and faith of God---mountain-moving faith.

Some final considerations

We see that it can be more helpful to view healing the infirm using authority as the *process* of "moving a mountain" instead of as an instant, all-or-nothing, unpredictable event.

If you are using authority to heal the sick, *do not mix* praying and commanding. If you must pray, keep it separate and distinct from the commanding. We shall see cogent reasons for this later.

Ministering with the gift of healing, however, can be different. It can involve praying and priestly activities in various ways.

Authority can be Compared to Talents

Authority over diseases and demons given to disciples of Jesus Christ for the preaching of the gospel can be considered as "talents" which are entrusted to us to use on earth until Christ returns.

In the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25, a master summoned three servants and to each he entrusted a number of talents to be invested in the master's absence. Then he went on a long journey. When the master returned, he summoned the servants to account for their use of the talents.

The first two servants, to whom were given five and two talents respectively, were faithful with the talents entrusted to them and earned a profit for their master. Each was rewarded accordingly.

Matthew 25:24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 *So I was afraid* and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

We have found from experience that this can happen to believers even after they have been trained how to use authority to heal the sick. After the Basic Training they are on fire, applying what they have learned to heal the sick. But over time the *fear* and doubt can return. Eventually some believers will go back to the traditional practice of praying for the sick instead of healing them using the authority entrusted to them. This can be compared to what happened to the third servant. *Fear* paralyzed him and he dared not to invest the talent entrusted to him.

To minimize this, there should be follow-up encouragement. They should be organized opportunities for the trained believers to heal the sick as the gospel is preached. It is recommended that they attend the Training again. Repeated exposure to the teaching will increase the likelihood that it will remain and become a regular part of their walk as disciples.

26 "His master replied, '*You wicked, lazy servant!*

The master rebuked this servant severely simply because he failed to invest the talent and make a profit for him. The Lord is disappointed with his disciples when they fail to use what has been entrusted to them for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In his eyes they are wicked and lazy.

...28 "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.

If we do not use what the Lord has entrusted to us---for example, authority over diseases and demons---it may be taken away from us and given to those who have been faithful and fruitful.

29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is sobering for us to note that this fruitless servant was thrown into the darkness. Exactly what this may entail is subject to debate, but it is obviously to be avoided at all costs. He was thrown outside into the darkness not because he had committed some horrible crime, but had simply failed to use what had been entrusted to him for the master's profit. We who claim to follow and serve the Lord Jesus Christ should take note. It was none other than *fear* ("So I was afraid") that brought disaster upon the third servant. And it is fear leading to doubt which can cause us to disobey the Lord's command to heal the sick as we proclaim the kingdom of God to the lost.

After we are taught about the use of authority to heal the sick, we are *far more accountable* to God than before. If we are faithful to use the talent fruitfully, the Lord will be pleased and we will be rewarded. But if out of fear we fail to use it for his kingdom, we will suffer.

Luke 16:10 "He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much...

How do we know which God is the one true God?

Or, is it possible that unbelievers will confuse Biblical healing with healing through demonic spirits?

In some cultures and countries, sorcery and idolatry are practices well-known to the local people. People afflicted by some kind of infirmity or tormented by demons will commonly seek out the paid services of a sorcerer. The sorcerer will employ witchcraft to treat the person. At times, what appear to be "miracles" take place and the sufferer finds relief through the treatment. The treatment itself, as we shall see below, itself involves the participation of evil spirits. We know, however, that only God is the author of genuine miracles of healing and deliverance. And so a pertinent question arises. Is it possible that unbelievers will confuse and identify healing from God with healing through sorcerers and evil spirits? For that matter, how can we be sure that Biblical miracles are from the one true God, and that the miracles behind sorcery are not of God?

How would God deal with demons afflicting a person?

The one true God is in heaven on high. Everything else is under His authority. He therefore has authority over demons and diseases. How would God therefore deal with demons and disease which are afflicting someone? God would use *His authority* and *issue commands* ordering them to leave. And because they are under His authority, they would obey His commands and leave. Those afflicted would be set free and healed. This is precisely what Jesus did when he was on earth.

Luke 4:32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had **authority**. 33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" 35 **"Be quiet!"** Jesus said sternly. **"Come out of him!"** Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. 36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? **With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits** and they come out!" 37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

The way in which Jesus dealt with the demon proves that Jesus was sent by the one true God and was in fact the Son of God---he had the authority of God and he used it to deliver the man. When disciples of Christ today use the same authority and power to give orders to evil spirits and infirmities in the name of Jesus, people are healed and set free. This is the evidence to the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that we are sent by the one true God.

Sorcerers do it differently

By contrast, sorcerers and the like use a very different approach---they employ witchcraft. When someone afflicted by a demon goes to a sorcerer for help, he typically will instruct the sufferer to go to the market and purchase a chicken. He will then take the chicken, slaughter it if needed, and prepare a tasty meal. He will eventually eat the chicken. However, the meal has important symbolic significance. It is actually a sacrifice to the demon for the purpose of appeasing it. The hope is that the demon will be pleased with the chicken and therefore stop tormenting the afflicted person. But any relief accomplished in such a way, of course, will either be short-lived or result in even greater darkness in the future. The demon will later return with even greater fury.

Luke 11:24 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

Even if the demon does not return, the person's belief and allegiance to witchcraft has been hardened. He will be in greater spiritual darkness than before.

Who has greater authority---the sorcerer or the demon?

A moment's thought will make it clear that the one who offers the sacrifice (the sorcerer) has less authority than the one who receives the sacrifice (the demon). For example, a dishonest businessman who offers a bribe to curry favor with a corrupt government official obviously has less authority than the government official who receives the bribe and who has the official authority to help the businessman with a favor.

Sorcerers and the like therefore have no authority over demons and diseases. Conversely, demons have authority over them. The power of sorcery is therefore **not** from the one true God. Those who offer sacrifices as appeasement, who use mantras, fetishes, charms, amulets, incantations and the like to perform "miracles" clearly do not have authority over demons and diseases **to rebuke and to command them** to leave as only the one true God does. And He has given this authority to His disciples today to rebuke and command demons and diseases to leave, especially in the context of sharing the gospel. When we explain these things to unbelievers as we minister to them with authority, they will see the clear difference between healing from evil spirits and healing from the one true God in the name of Jesus Christ.

With proper understanding of the contrast between the two approaches, miraculous healing from the Lord can actually help unbelievers understand which power is from

the one true God. It can actually *help* and not confuse and hinder the lost from coming to Jesus Christ.

Only the one true God has authority to forgive sin

When someone commits a sin, he or she is sinning against the one true God---the Holy God in heaven who hates sin. And since God is just, the sinner must pay for the sin through eternal punishment in the lake of fire. If there is forgiveness or remission of sins, it can only be from the one true God in heaven against whom we have sinned. It is clear therefore that only God in heaven has authority to forgive sin---no one else.

In this light let us study what Jesus did at one occasion.

Mark 2:1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, **"Son, your sins are forgiven."**

6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

The teachers of the law were indignant because Jesus was clearly *claiming to be equal to God* by saying to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Look at what Jesus said to them next.

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"

Which is easier to say before a crowd of people?

His question is most significant. Clearly the forgiveness of sins is far more important than the healing of physical disease. However the forgiveness of sins is an invisible spiritual transaction. There is no outward evidence that it has in fact taken place. Therefore it is relatively easy to say to someone, "Your sins are forgiven." Who knows if anything has actually happened?

In contrast, telling a paralytic to "get up" in front of a crowd of people demands visible action and is therefore very risky. Everyone will be looking at the paralytic to see if a miracle actually takes place and he gets up. If he does not get up, then you will feel and look very bad indeed in front of the crowd. Therefore, it is much easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' than to say to a paralytic, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'. Look what Jesus does next.

10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus healed the man miraculously by commanding him to get up---by using authority. He performed that which was more difficult to say. By successfully performing that which was more difficult to say, he proved that he had authority on earth also to do that which was easier to say. *By healing the man*, Jesus proved that he also had *authority to forgive the man's sin*. It is interesting to note that Jesus *used authority* to heal the man by commanding him to get up.

Jesus' many miracles proved that he was the Messiah

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ performed many miracles, perhaps most of which were miraculous healings. These miracles proved that he was the promised Messiah who had authority to forgive sin through his upcoming death on the cross. He has given authority to his disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons in his name. And when we use this authority to perform miracles in his name, we are again providing the evidence to the lost that our Lord Jesus Christ has authority to forgive sin and to save sinners from condemnation in hell.

Infirmities are ultimately the consequence of sin. The One who has authority to remove the consequence of sin---for example, infirmities---also has authority to remove sin itself.

Healing the Infirm using Authority in the Book of Acts

Jesus gave authority over disease and demons during the time of the gospels before the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost. When the disciples went out to proclaim the kingdom of God, they healed the sick by using this authority. Clearly they did not use the gift of healing. The gift was not available until Pentecost at the very earliest when the Holy Spirit came, bringing the gifts of the Spirit.

Now we must address the very relevant question of how the disciples ministered to the infirm in Acts when the gift of healing was available. Did they continue to use authority, or did they abandon the use of authority in favor of the gift of healing which was now available to them? The question is important since today we are still living in the “dispensation” of Acts. The answer to the question will have direct bearing on how we minister to the infirm today when we are sharing the gospel to the lost.

We will focus on the ministries of Peter and Paul for which Acts provides rich and revealing detail.

A secondary but important question for believers of charismatic background is: did the disciples speak in tongues when they healed the sick? Charismatic believers will often do this when ministering to the sick, and we want to know if this practice is in fact scriptural.

Acts is quite specific in recording instances of tongues being spoken:

- In Acts 2:4 when the Holy Spirit came, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.
- In Acts 10:46 when Peter was sharing the gospel to Cornelius and his family and friends, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues.
- In Acts 19:6 at Ephesus when Paul placed his hands on the disciples of John the Baptist, they spoke in tongues.

Let us see if Acts similarly records the disciples speaking in other tongues when they healed the sick.

Peter at the Temple Gate

Acts 3:1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

In this account take from the temple gate, Peter performs an extraordinary miracle by healing a beggar who was lame from birth. When Peter healed him, were his eyes open or closed?

4 Peter *looked straight at him*, as did John. Then Peter *said*, "Look at us!"

According to Scripture, Peter's eyes were clearly open at that moment. It is not scriptural to close one's eyes when healing the sick.

5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. 6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.*"

- Did Peter use the gift of healing or did he use authority? This was not the gift of healing, but rather the use of authority by Peter. We know this is the case because Peter issued a command to the beggar to "walk." When a command is given, authority is being exercised. Since the gift of healing was already available to the disciples by that time, why did Peter not instead use the gift to minister to the beggar?

The manifestation (of a gift) of the Holy Spirit depends on the will of the Spirit. This means that believers do not have the ability to use the gift just whenever and wherever they would like. Only when the Holy Spirit stirs us can we "operate" in a particular gift. At that moment by the temple gate, the gift of healing was not in operation through Peter. That being the case, Peter simply used something else---another "weapon," so to speak---which was at his disposal. He exercised the *authority to heal* given to him by the Lord. But why was the gift of healing not available at that moment?

To answer this question, let's reflect on the purpose of the gift versus the purpose of the authority. The purpose of the gift is primarily to minister to believers in the context of building up the body of Christ. Thus the gift of healing can be manifest in gatherings of believers. But the purpose of the authority primarily is to demonstrate to the lost that Jesus is the Christ, the only Savior. Therefore the authority to heal is especially to be used *outside the gatherings of believers*---outside of "church"---where the lost are. The incident in question took place not in a gathering of believers, but rather at the gate *outside* the Temple where there were many unbelievers. Thus the context of this incident was *evangelistic* in nature. According to our understanding of Scripture, the authority to heal is the preferred approach to healing when the context involves sharing the gospel with the lost. It therefore makes perfect sense why the gift of healing was not available at that moment, and why Peter exercised the authority to heal instead.

Again, you might subscribe to the teaching that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit have ceased to operate in this present dispensation. However, that does not negate the teaching about the authority to heal which is not a gift of the Holy Spirit. You can simply omit this material about the gift of healing without in any way affecting your ability to understand the authority to heal to be used in soul-winning.

- Did Peter say: "*Father*, in the name of Jesus, we command this man to walk?

No, Peter did not at all address the Father to inform Him that he was commanding the lame beggar to walk. In light of Scripture it makes no sense to do this when attempting to use the authority to heal. But believers from a charismatic background will often do this. Unfortunately it is not scriptural. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a disciple healing the sick using such an approach. It is not surprising, therefore, that it usually does not work. We know that the sick are usually *not* instantly healed using such an approach.

- Did Peter speak in tongues?

In the detailed narrative of the incident which includes the specific words that Peter spoke, it is not recorded that Peter spoke to God in tongues or prayed at all for that matter. It would behoove charismatic believers to revisit their reasons for praying in tongues when ministering to the infirm with the use of authority. The practice is a charismatic tradition and not in accordance to Scripture. Moreover, it is not effective in healing the sick, as abundant experience has taught us.

- Did Peter perform any "priestly" action when he healed the beggar?

No, Peter not only did not pray to God, he did not engage in praise or worship or thanksgiving to Him when he healed the man. We are not saying that Peter never functioned in his priestly office. But it is clear that there is a time to function the priestly office, and a time to function in the kingly office. The two offices should not be confounded or confused. They are distinct and separate. When they are confounded---as they often are in charismatic circles when the sick are receiving ministry---there will be few results. No many infirmities will be healed.

- Peter's eyes were open when he healed the beggar. When healing the sick you are performing a kingly action, not a priestly one. There is no reason to shut your eyes during such an action. When a king issues a command, he does not close his eyes but will look at the one whom he is commanding.
- However, please note the following point. The use of the gift of healing, when the Holy Spirit makes it available, will contrast with the use of the authority to heal. When the gift is in operation, there may be some priestly action such as prayer in its various forms as well as praise, worship, and thanksgiving.

7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Then Peter took the action of taking the lame man by the hand and helping him up. The man was then instantly healed. At that moment, Peter was very certain---perhaps through the Holy Spirit---that the man would be healed. After he commanded the man to walk with mountain-moving faith and without any doubt that the man would be healed, he followed with a physical action: he helped the man to get up. Let us keep this in mind when we are ministering to infirm people in similar conditions---to those who have difficulty getting up to walk or need the help of canes and crutches or who come in wheelchairs. After we issue an authoritative command to them, we may want to help them get up and to lead them by the hand to take the first few steps. Infirm people can be healed simply by following Peter's example in Scripture. However, miracles of this great magnitude are relatively rare. The mountain which Peter moved was very large indeed.

Acts 3:11 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.

Miracles generally get people's attention. After the lame beggar, known to everyone who frequented the area, was seen walking and jumping, people came running. This is the very reason why Jesus commanded his disciples to heal the sick. This is why we want to learn to obey his command. It is for the sake of the gospel.

12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?16 *By faith in the name of Jesus*, this man whom you see and know was made strong.

When Peter saw the people gathering, he knew the very purpose of the miracle was going to be fulfilled. And that was to give them convincing evidence that Jesus was in fact the Christ. Miracles done in this type of context are not opportunities for preachers to take offerings from gullible crowds or from grateful people who are healed. No, they are opportunities to proclaim the name of Jesus.

It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. (NIV)

Peter explains to the crowd how the healing took place. According to the New International Version of the Bible, there were two factors responsible for the miracle. First of all, there was "Jesus' name." Secondly, there was "the faith that comes through him."

- *Jesus' name:* When Jesus and his name live in us, we are given a measure of *authority* to heal the sick. It was this *authority* that Peter used to heal the beggar.
- *The faith that comes through him:* Along with authority, Peter also received faith that comes through Jesus Christ. This could only refer to mountain-moving faith, or faith of God. It is through Jesus that we receive faith of God to move mountains, or the "God kind of faith" as called by some.

Peter's explanation of the miraculous healing not surprisingly echoes what he learned from Jesus regarding the cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11:22. On that occasion Jesus explained to Peter that he had cursed the fig tree by commanding it with "faith of God."

Acts 4:4 But many of those who heard the Word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Such can be the result of healing the sick and then proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. Like Peter, let us also learn to do what Jesus taught and commanded his disciples.

Acts 4:22 For the man who was miraculously healed was *over forty years old*.

This final bit of information will be helpful to our study in the next chapter.

The Healing of Aeneas

Acts 9:32 As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years.

Peter was traveling around the region visiting the saints. When he arrived in Lydda he came upon Aeneas, a man who had been paralyzed for a period of eight years. You will recall that the beggar at the temple gate had been lame for over forty years since birth. What might have passed through Peter's mind when he heard that Aeneas had been paralyzed for "only" eight years?

Peter might have considered Aeneas' infirmity to be for him a relatively "small" mountain, not very difficult to move into the sea. After all, the Lord had used him to heal the lame beggar---a far more "difficult" case, a much "bigger" mountain. So let's observe how Peter approached this particular situation. Did Peter first spend days in agonizing prayer and fasting to increase his mountain-moving faith before daring to heal Aeneas?

34 "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat."

- Is this the gift of healing or the use of authority?

Again, we see Peter issuing the command "get up" to Aeneas. Peter is exercising authority and not the gift of healing. Moreover, the venue of the miracle does not appear to be a gathering of believers, but more likely the home of Aeneas where he lies paralyzed. The gift of healing was not in operation on that occasion.

- Did Peter say: "*Father*, in the name of Jesus, we command this man to get up?"

No, Peter did not use the approach that many charismatic ministers and believers use. He did not speak to the Father even as he commanded Aeneas to get up. He did not pray, but spoke directly to Aeneas with authority.

- Did Peter speak in tongues?

Peter's words as recorded in the narrative do not include any speaking in tongues. There was no prayer in any language whatsoever.

When a charismatic believer prays in tongues in the very process of using authority to minister to the infirm, he may unfortunately be betraying himself. What is the thinking behind such a practice? Since we have not been taught how to heal the sick with confidence according to Scripture, we feel inadequate and are not exactly sure what to do. The charismatic believer will then pray in tongues, hoping that God will tell him what to do, or even better, that God

Himself will “show up” to perform the miracle. But what the believer might be revealing by praying in tongues instead of simply issuing a command with faith of God is doubt in his heart and ignorance. When the believer gives himself away to the “enemy”---meaning sickness and demons---in such a manner, they will not submit to the authority of that believer.

- Was there any priestly action?

There was no priestly action from Peter whatsoever---no pleading God for mercy, no thanksgiving, no praise of any kind during the actual process of healing Aeneas.

- If, however, the gift of healing is in operation through the Holy Spirit, there will likely be some priestly actions like prayer in its various forms as well as praise and thanksgiving. If we are going to be consistently effective in the use of authority to heal the infirm, we should understand clearly the differences between it and the gift of healing. Confusing and confounding the two will usually bring failure.

Immediately Aeneas got up. 35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

When word of the miracle spread in the region, two entire communities turned to Jesus Christ. To see results like this in our own labors, we need to understand what Peter learned from Jesus about healing the sick. We can gain this understanding in part by examining the details of how Peter healed the sick.

The Raising of Dorcas

The third and final miracle performed by Peter which we want to examine is the raising of a dead woman named Dorcas, a faithful sister in Christ. After she died of an illness, the believers called Peter to raise her back to life when they heard that he was in the area.

Acts 9.39 Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. 40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then *he got down on his knees and prayed.*

Peter did something here that he did not do when he performed the two earlier miracles. He prayed to the Lord. Why?

Although Scripture does not tell us explicitly, we can understand why on this occasion Peter pauses first to pray. This is not a matter of healing the sick as were the two earlier miracles. The woman is not simply sick; she is dead. There is a world of difference between being sick and being dead. When someone is sick, there can be hope for recovery. But when someone has died, there is generally no more hope for that person on earth.

Peter is faced with not only a very much “bigger” mountain, he must move a different kind of mountain as well. He is not simply dealing with sickness; he is confronted by physical death itself.

Let’s look at the situation. Peter was one of the original twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Since he and the others were personally commanded by Jesus to “raise the dead” (Matthew 10:8), he knew that he had the authority to do so. Nevertheless, raising the dead is not something that one does every day, as could be the case with healing the sick if one is a preacher of the gospel. Perhaps Peter felt not quite ready to “move the huge mountain” and raise Dorcas back to life. Perhaps he had some doubt---quite understandably for those who have ever tried to raise the dead. What do you do when you are not ready to engage the enemy and to move the mountain? You pray to the Lord as Peter did. And as you pray, the Lord will prepare you and enable you to move the mountain.

What did Peter pray?

Scripture does not tell us what or how he prayed. It is up to our sanctified imagination. For example, we might want to ask the Lord concerning His will in the matter. The Lord does not will for every dead person to be raised back to life by us. He clearly has not given us the authority to go into cemeteries and to raise the corpses or bones in the buried coffins back to life. The great majority of the dead will remain in their graves until Christ returns and they hear his voice.

However, there will be a few whom the Lord may will to bring back to life to suit His purpose. Therefore when we are given an opportunity to raise the dead, we might in some cases want to ask the Lord whether or not it is His will. Perhaps that is what Peter did, and the Lord replied to him in the affirmative.

In some other cases it might be less a matter of the Lord's will, but rather "according to our faith." In such a case the Lord's will is "neutral"---neither yes nor no. If we have the faith for it, we can and should go for it.

There are situations in which we might not need to inquire about the Lord's will. Let's say we are driving down the freeway and encounter a serious accident ahead of us. We are the very first to arrive on the scene. We see a woman lying on the road---apparently killed in the crash---with her young children crying over her. In such a situation we might not want to pause to ask about God's will, but quickly attempt to raise her back to life. While the Lord Himself has all authority and can raise the dead at any time He chooses, we His disciples are limited in power, authority, and faith. Therefore it is best to raise the dead as soon as possible after death. The longer one waits, the bigger the mountain will be for us.

While still in prayer to the Lord, we might want to ask Him for greater mountain-moving faith to move such a large mountain into the sea. We might want to ask the Lord for the authority to raise the dead, especially if we are not an apostle. This is the time for the priestly action of going to the Lord on our knees in a humble attitude of prayer. It may be a time to "connect" with the Lord through prayer, worship, and thanksgiving. As we connect with Him, He will prepare us to engage the enemy with authority and faith of God. As we pray in the Holy Spirit, our faith will be built up (Jude 20) and we will be ready to command the dead person with confidence to wake up.

Notice that as long as Peter was on his knees in prayer, the miracle did not place; Dorcas remained dead. We learn from this that prayer in itself (apart from the gift of healing) does not generally result in miraculous healings and the like. Rather, the purpose of prayer on such occasions is *to prepare us to perform the miracle later* through the use of authority. Prayer is most definitely important, but since its nature is that of a priestly action directed up to the Lord, it does not generally result in miraculous healings apart from the operation of the gift of healing. The miracles take place when we put on our kingly robes and command the "work of the enemy"---whether infirmity, demon, or death---with authority and faith of God. That is precisely what Peter did next after he prayed.

Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.

Peter is now no longer praying to the Lord. He is no longer in the priestly mode, but has shifted to the kingly mode. He speaks directly to the dead woman and commands her to get up. She obeys him. Notice that the miracle did not take place during the prayer, but only when the command was given. We see here the clear

difference in function between the priestly and the kingly. We should keep them separate and distinct.

- Did Peter say: "*Father, in the name of Jesus*, we command Tabitha to get up"?

Again, Peter did not address the Father and then command the miracle in the same breath. He had already been in prayer to the Father on his knees. Now was the time for direct action against the enemy of death---for a direct command to the dead woman. Notice that Peter kept the stage of prayer and the stage of commanding separate and distinct; he did not mix or combine them.

- Did Peter speak in tongues?

The narrative, quite rich in detail, does not record that Peter spoke in other languages during this stage. He had already prayed during the priestly stage; why should he pray again during the kingly stage? It simply makes no sense. There is a time to pray, and there is a time to command. There is a time to eat, and there is a time to sleep. Normally, one cannot do both activities at the same time.

- Do you think Peter remained on his knees, or he stood up on his feet?

Someone who is on his knees is in an attitude of surrender, humility, and helplessness. There is no authority when one is on his knees. When a king issues a command, he will not be on his knees. A warrior always stands up to fight. It is obvious that Peter stood up on his feet after he finished praying in order to issue the command to the dead woman.

- Do you think Peter's eyes were open or closed when he raised Tabitha back to life?

A soldier does not close his eyes when aiming his weapon at an enemy. A king does not close his eyes when issuing a command to a subject. You do not close your eyes when commanding your dog to sit. Therefore do not close your eyes when healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead.

42 This became known all over Joppa, and *many people believed in the Lord*.

The effect of the miracle was to bring many souls to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Two Separate and Distinct Stages

The miracle of raising Dorcas back to life had two *separate* and *distinct* stages:

- Prayer, a priestly action
- Commanding, a kingly action

What might be the consequence of mixing the prayer and the command? We are going to address this issue because such mixing is commonly done by some believers when they minister to the infirm. This practice is not scriptural and usually results in failure to heal the infirmity or drive out the demon. We want to understand why. There are at least two reasons for this.

The first reason has to do with what happens to authority in actual practice when prayer and commanding are mixed and not kept separate.

When we pray to the Lord, we come before him in an attitude of gentle humility and helplessness. We have no authority before Him; He has all authority. In prayer, our authority is zero. When we get up to face the enemy and issue commands to him with mountain-moving faith, we want at that moment to have maximum authority. Disease and demons submit to superior authority, just as in battle enemy soldiers will submit to superior firepower.

In prayer, therefore, we display *no authority*. When face-to-face with the enemy, we want to display *maximum authority* as we issue commands to him. What then is the consequence of mixing prayer and commanding? It is not difficult to see that we will compromise, dilute, and thus weaken our authority before the enemy when we pray and command when facing him in battle. When our authority in a practical sense is weakened in this way, the disease or demons will not obey us.

We see this principle applied in every day life. When a general issues a command to one of his men, he does not mix prayer to God in with the command to the soldier. He does not need to pray to God because he knows that his men will submit to his authority. (In a practical sense, God has nothing to do with soldiers submitting to the authority of their general. Such authority will work even in the apparent "absence" of God.) When you command your dog to sit, you do not at the same time pray to God and ask for His help. Your dog will obey you even if you don't believe in God.

To take the analogy even further, consider a highly trained and well-armed soldier who is sent out to war. Let us say he is engaged in a firefight with inferior enemy forces who have far less firepower. He is firing his automatic weapon at them. Suddenly, in the middle of the fight, he drops his weapon, pulls out his mobile phone and calls his commander-in-chief. He cries out to him: "Mr. President, help! I don't think I'm able to win this battle. So I ask *you* to come here to fight against the enemy and wipe them out. After all, you are our Commander-in-Chief and have great power and authority."

Such a scenario is absurd, and will not happen with trained and properly armed soldiers. But this is not a far cry from what many believers do when they minister to the infirm. Because we *doubt* that we can heal the infirm as Jesus has sent and commanded us to do, we *mix* the command to the infirmity (or demon) under our authority with the prayer to God above.

Here is another scenario. Soldiers always undergo training and preparation for battle well *before* they are shipped out to the battlefield. Once they arrive and step onto the battlefield, they are completely occupied in engaging and killing the enemy. It is foolhardy to pause for preparation *after* the fighting begins. It is the same with the process of healing the sick with the use of authority. Prayer to God (if necessary) is *preparation* to move the mountain. After we are prepared in prayer, then we engage the infirmity by issuing commands. We do not mix the prayer with the commands once we engage the infirmity.

There may be exceptions to this, but for the sake of avoiding confusion at this stage we will address these later in this book.

What is the consequence of doubting that we can do what the Lord commands us to do?

The consequence of doubt: Peter walking on the water

One day Peter was in a boat on the Sea of Galilee when he saw Jesus walking on the water toward him. Peter was quite impressed and wanted to walk on water as Jesus was doing.

Matthew 14:28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

Peter wisely waits for a command from Jesus before attempting to perform the miracle. Without such a command, Peter could drown. Especially in the realm of the supernatural, we should take care to have received a command before the Lord before attempting to perform the miracle. Within the context of evangelism, we note that the Lord has clearly commanded us to heal the sick.

29 "Come," he said.

With the command to "come," Jesus *authorizes* Peter to perform the miracle of walking on water. It is clearly *the Lord's will* for Peter to perform this miracle. Only then does Peter step out of the boat.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

Peter obeys the command of the Lord and begins to walk on water toward Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind, *he was afraid* and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Before he was able to reach Jesus in obedience to the command to come, Peter allowed fear to enter his heart. What was the immediate consequence of the fear? Peter sank. The miracle was over---gone. Since his life was now in danger, Peter did the apparently reasonable thing of crying out to Jesus to save him.

We have been taught that when we cry out to the Lord, "save me," he is always pleased. When we ask him to save us, it means that we believe in him and trust him. Therefore he must always be pleased when we cry out to him in such a way. Is this in fact true? The answer---astonishingly to some---is no.

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "*You of little faith,*" he said, "*why did you doubt?*"

Even though Jesus answered Peter's cry by quickly pulling him up out of the water, he was clearly displeased with him. What did Peter do wrong to deserve such a rebuke?

Jesus was displeased with Peter because he had commanded him to walk on the water and expected him to obey the command successfully. We see a principle here. It does not matter whether the Lord commands us to perform a "natural" action like preaching the gospel or a supernatural action like healing the sick. If he commands us to do something, he authorizes us and enables us to obey his command. But if we allow fear to control us, we can fail to complete the Lord's command.

It was not enough just for Peter to step out of the boat. He also had to walk on water *successfully*, without sinking.

Why did Peter sink?

"*You of little faith,*" he said, "*why did you doubt?*"

Peter sank because he doubted. But exactly what did Peter doubt? We are taught not to doubt God and His word. We are taught that God is faithful and will fulfill His promises to us. We are urged not doubt God and his ability to help us. All of this is good and correct. But what did Peter doubt?

Did Peter doubt God? Did Peter doubt that Jesus could walk on water? No. Peter doubted that *he himself* could walk on water. He sank not because he doubted Jesus, but because he doubted that he could do what the Lord had commanded him to do.

In *doubting* that he could walk on water as Jesus had commanded him, one could say Peter lacked faith *of* God---he lacked mountain-moving faith.

Mark 11:22 And answering Jesus said to them, "*Have faith of God.*" (MKJV)

23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and *does not doubt in his heart* but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (NIV)

Peter failed and sank because he doubted he could do what Jesus commanded him to do; he sank because he lacked *faith of God*.

Faith in God and faith of God

From this perspective, faith *in* God essentially says, "I know the Lord can do it." The Lord is able to fulfil His promises to us. He is able to forgive us of our sins and give us eternal life. Faith in God is trusting God.

Faith *of* God, however, is different. It essentially says, "I know I can do it because I have been given the authority and the ability and the command from the Lord to do it.

It is not enough just for us to step out of the boat. We must also walk on water successfully. It is not enough just to try to heal the sick as Jesus commands us. We must also heal the sick successfully to bring souls to Him.

Applying this to healing the sick

As an illustration, let's say you are attempting to heal an infirm person. Just as Peter began well enough when he stepped out of the boat, you are speaking to the infirmity with authority and mountain-moving faith at first. Then you ask the person if she is healed or feels better. She replies that she is not any better; she might even feel a bit worse. What do you feel coming on you at that moment?

You would feel fear and doubt. This is what Peter felt when he looked at the wind and the waves. They convinced him that it was foolhardy and dangerous to walk on water. Jesus could certainly walk on water---after all, he was the divine Son of God--but who was Peter? Likewise, you suddenly feel helpless trying to heal the person. Who are you kidding? Jesus can heal the sick, but who are you?

As your faith evaporates, your confidence begins to sink, taking you down with it. At that moment you cry out, "help me, Jesus!" That is exactly what Peter did when he sank. As Jesus was not pleased with Peter when he asked him to save him from the sea, Jesus might not be pleased with you when you cry out to him under such circumstances. The Lord might even heal the infirm person directly apart from you

just as he heard Peter and saved him from drowning in the water. But as he was not pleased with Peter, he might not be pleased with you.

What should we do when the mountain of the infirmity refuses to budge at first try? We should not panic and cry out to Jesus. We should not forget that the infirmity is under our authority and therefore should obey our command. But in some way, we are being tested. We will not take "no" for an answer from something which Scripture says is under our authority. Do we readily accept it when our pet dog refuses to obey our command to sit when we know well that it should obey us? No, we do not accept it. We feel a sense of indignation when our pet refuses to obey us. We roll up our sleeves, repeat the command to him and may even raise our voice for greater emphasis. Then he knows we mean business, and he sits.

This is how we respond when the infirmity refuses to obey us on the first try. We feel "holy indignation" and will not be put down by something Scripture says is under our authority. Therefore we lay hands on the person again and rebuke and issue the command again with renewed mountain-moving faith. Then the infirmity or demon knows we mean business and begins to obey us. We now have him on the run and will mostly certainly drive him out. The person will be healed.

If the infirmity or demon shows no sign of moving on the second try, we do not back down. We continue to press the fight. When the enemy knows that we will not be denied, it will relent.

A powerful testimony of persistence and mountain-moving faith

Below is a testimony from a servant of God named Carl Henderson who trained with The Elijah Challenge. He is currently a missionary in the Philippines and Elijah Challenge Coordinator for the Philippines.

"My 84-year-old mother was a bedridden Alzheimer patient. She had not walked in over four months, and had not eaten solid food in over a month. The hospice people said she was dying. We drove a long distance to say our last goodbyes to her but I came with a plan to use God's authority and the name of Jesus to heal her.

After my family sang hymns, ministered to her and loved on her, they left the room in tears. There was a dark, palpable spirit of death in the room. I ministered the Elijah Challenge "A-bomb" to her for over an hour continuously, taking authority many times over her many symptoms---those I could remember or that she could tell me about. She experienced some gradual improvement in some lesser symptoms: headache, blurry vision, and weakness, etc. I also explained to her God's authority to heal her, while I rubbed lotion on her painful feet. I did this to show my love for her and so that she could believe also.

She was in and out of consciousnesses during this time. I continued speaking to her and rebuking the disease. I even rebuked the spirit of death many times.

Many, many times I continued to command healing to her from head to toe, and at the end of an hour she said she felt tingling and warmth in her legs. At that point, I commanded her to get up and walk in Jesus name! I helped her to her feet and walked her around her room. At first she walked slowly, but within five minutes with confidence and without help. She walked into the living room with me holding her hand (she said "I was her date") and continued on to the dining room table where she sat down. She announced, no longer whispering faint words, that she was hungry and wanted to eat "real food."

My shocked family could not believe what they were seeing. My mother's face was even glowing and had color. The deathly pallor was gone and her voice was strong.

My sister who is her caretaker said, "What did you do?" I told her, "God healed her." They made her dinner and she ate heartily and she followed it up with a big piece of pie. She then walked to a chair in the living room and sat down with my 3-year-old son, her grandson. They sat together, talked and watched TV; he was meeting her for the first time. After an hour she announced she was tired and wanted to go back to bed. We helped her from the chair and she walked back to bed for a nap.

The next day she was still walking around the house and eating by herself. She was actually getting into the refrigerator and frustrating my poor sister. When we left for our long drive home she wanted to come out on the porch to see us off. We hugged her and left her standing at the door as we drove away.

That was four years ago. She went from her deathbed to a nuisance in about an hour because of the The Elijah Challenge A-bomb. My sister tells me that at 89 years old, she is going downhill again with Alzheimer's disease and is more in bed than out. However, she already has had four more years of life because of the authority and power of Jesus' name. She says now "she is tired and is ready to go home to the Lord."

Long story made short, don't give up. No one in my family believed after we viewed her terrible condition that she would live---let alone be healed. She was obviously dying; in fact, it was hard to keep from weeping at the sight of her. I still hoped and believed she could be healed. Someone who believes with "Mountain-Moving Faith" is more

than enough for God. It took some perseverance but our God was and is faithful.”

On occasion, the infirmity will show no sign of responding after repeated commands from us. How do we explain this? Perhaps the infirmity is a “big mountain” (such as blindness since birth) and your level of authority for that severe an infirmity is insufficient. Or you may not have enough mountain-moving faith to move it into the sea. Prayer and fasting may be in order before attempting to heal that infirmity. Or, the question of God’s will to heal that person may be significant. We will examine this possibility later.

Where we have *not* been given authority

In a situation where we have *not* been given authority to act, then by all means when we are in danger or in need we should ask the Lord for help. He does have all authority and can indeed save us or provide for us. It is therefore important to know what authority the Lord has given to us.

Fear and Faith are Opposites

Matthew 8:23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

The disciples were in a boat which had been caught in a severe storm. They were in danger of drowning in the churning sea. They cried out to Jesus to save them. We have been taught traditionally that such a prayer is most definitely pleasing to the Lord. When we ask the Lord to help or save us, it means that we trust Him. He will certainly hear our prayer and help us. But was Jesus pleased with their cry in this instance?

26 He replied, "You of *little faith*, why are you so *afraid*?"

Jesus rebuked them, showing that he was not at all pleased with them. He reproached them for their little faith and fear. Here we learn again that the Lord is not always pleased when we cry out to Him for help.

Then he got up and *rebuked* the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Notice the action that Jesus took regarding the danger posed by the winds and the waves. He did not pray to the Father. Rather he rebuked them, and they obeyed his command. Jesus performed this miracle not through prayer, but rather by issuing an authoritative command directly to the winds and the waves.

27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves *obey* him!"

Clearly Jesus was not pleased when the disciples cried out to him for help. What then did Jesus expect them to do? Let us examine two other incidents before attempting to answer this question.

Remember the failure of the disciples to cast out the demon?

Matthew 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 He replied, "Because you have so *little faith*."

We have already seen that when the disciples failed to cast out the demon of epilepsy, it was because they had little *faith of God*---they *doubted* they could drive out the demon as Jesus had commanded them.

In Mark 9, the same incident is *seemingly* recorded differently. Let's attempt to understand the reason for this discrepancy between the two accounts.

Mark 9:17 A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

19 "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. 21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

So far, there is no conflict between this account from Mark and the account from Matthew which we studied earlier. But in the next verse appear words of Jesus which are not consistent with his words as recorded in Matthew's account.

Mark 9:23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

This is clearly not consistent with the parallel verse from Matthew 17 as it appears in the New International Version translation:

Matthew 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. *Nothing will be impossible for you.*"

In the NIV translation of Mark's account, Jesus says that everything is possible for him who believes. However, it is not clear what the object of the verb "believes" is. One obvious interpretation is that everything is possible for him who believes *in the Lord*. But this interpretation conflicts with what Jesus clearly taught in Matthew, where he taught that nothing will be impossible for the one who has the faith of a mustard seed, or mountain-moving faith.

To reiterate, Mark's account appears to teach that everything is possible for him who believes (in the Lord); while Matthew's account clearly holds that nothing is possible for him who has mountain-moving faith, or faith of God. Let's attempt to reconcile the conflict by considering the translation of Mark 9:23 from the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible.

Mark 9:23 And Jesus said to him, If you are able to believe, all things are possible to the ones believing."

The Greek word translated "believe" and "believing" can equally well be translated "have faith" and "having faith." If we use the latter English translation instead of the former, then the verse can literally be translated:

Mark 9:23 And Jesus said to him, If you are able to have faith, *all things are possible to the ones having faith.*"

Having what kind of faith? It is having *faith of God*. With this understanding, the apparent conflict between the two accounts disappears and they actually say the same thing.

Matthew 17:20 ...if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you."

Both accounts teach that if you have faith of God or mountain-moving faith, all things are possible for you; nothing will be impossible for you. We can conclude from Mark's account as well that the disciples failed to cast out the demon because they lacked *faith of God*.

When Peter sank beneath the waves and cried out to Jesus...

Matthew 14:31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "*You of little faith,*" he said, "*why did you doubt?*"

Earlier we concluded that Peter sank beneath the waves because he lacked faith of God---*he doubted* that could walk on water as Jesus had commanded him.

When the disciples on the boat feared the wind and the waves...

Matt 8:26 He replied, "*You of little faith,* why are you so *afraid?*" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

What kind of faith did they lack? We see an obvious parallel between this incident and the two earlier ones. Can we say they lacked *faith of God* when they cried out to Jesus on the boat?

Let's consider what Jesus expected them to do if not to cry out to him to save them. There are obvious similarities between this incident and the two earlier ones. In all three cases, Jesus rebuked the disciples for having little faith. Jesus was referring to the same kind of faith throughout: faith of God. We cannot escape the

conclusion that Jesus likely expected *them* to rebuke the storm on their own using authority and faith of God.

While Scripture does not explicitly state that Jesus gave authority over winds and waves to his disciples on some occasions, such a conclusion is not unreasonable on the grounds of John 14:12.

Miracles involving the rebuking of storms are not uncommon. In a later chapter we will share how an approaching storm was rebuked at the beginning of an evangelistic crusade in India. Thousands of people witnessed the storm split in opposite directions, leaving us in the middle untouched by the wind, rain, and lightning. Servants of God whom we have trained in the use of authority have also witnessed similar miracles.

Three times the disciples disappointed Jesus

In each case, the disciples failed to do something that he expected them to do. They failed to cast out the demon. Peter failed to walk on water successfully. They did not even attempt to rebuke the storm. In each case, what was the reason for their failure? In each case, they lacked *faith of God*.

Scripture records outsiders who came to Jesus with faith that he would heal them. Jesus would commend them for their *faith in God* to receive their healing. For example, the woman with the bleeding in Mark 5 was healed by her faith when she touched Jesus' cloak. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

In contrast, Jesus would rebuke his disciples for failing to perform miracles he expected them to do because they lacked *faith of God*. What was the reason for the difference between the way he treated outsiders and the way he treated his disciples? He was preparing his disciples to take over the *great responsibility* of fulfilling the Great Commission after he left.

The "theology of helplessness"

For centuries if not a millennium or longer the Church has been paralyzed by a certain assumption that carries nearly the weight of theological doctrine. Perhaps since the time of Augustine, known by some as the father of modern western theology, this assumption has left its unmistakable stamp on our perception of the miraculous. We are taught that in the area of the supernatural, we are essentially helpless. We can only pray to God about it, trust Him for it, and wait on Him for the results. There is nothing else we can do. Only God can perform the miraculous. (We are excluding from this discussion any "false wonders" produced by powers which are *not* of God.)

This assumption of helplessness colors our perception of the miraculous, leading us to the conclusion that we have no direct hand in such events. Indeed this assumption is true in many areas of life. For example, we have no ability at all to determine the day of our birth. It is completely in the hands of God.

But we now see Scripture teaching that in the context of proclaiming the kingdom of God to the lost, we do have a measure of authority over disease and demons. We are in fact able to heal the sick and cast out demons to demonstrate to the lost that Jesus is the only way to the Father. Not only that, we have been *commanded* to do these things.

Where we have been given authority to do something, we should not be afraid and feel paralyzed, but rather take action as we have been commanded.

My personal testimony: going from faith *in* God to faith *of* God

Faith in God essentially says "I know *the Lord* can do it; He is God and nothing is impossible for Him." But faith of God says "I know *I* can do it, because I have been given the authority by the Lord to do it and have been commanded by Him to do it."

How does one go from faith *in* God to faith *of* God for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission? It may be helpful to the reader if I share my personal testimony.

I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior in 1976 at a Billy Graham Crusade in San Diego, California. At that time I was in a doctoral program at the University of California in Experimental Psychology, and was beginning preliminary work on my Ph.D. thesis. By 1977 I withdrew from the doctoral program at the University of California. I had become committed to serving God full-time. For that purpose I enrolled in a Master of Divinity program at a Seminary. In my spare time I would go out to the streets with my bullhorn to preach the gospel to the pedestrians and cars. Once I parked my car directly in front of a massage parlor and turned up the volume on my bullhorn to full blast. I called the people inside to repent and to turn to Jesus Christ. Another time I stationed myself in front of a Spanish-speaking apartment complex with my bullhorn and read slowly from a Spanish translation of "The Four Spiritual Laws." I read slowly because I had never learned Spanish, but could at least pronounce the words in the booklet.

Why did I do such things? I did them because Jesus had saved me and revealed Himself to me in a powerful and life-transforming way. I simply *had* to obey His command to preach the gospel and share His love with other sinners.

In 1978, I made the decision to leave everything behind in America and go overseas as a missionary with my wife. At that time, I had only one semester of earned credits from the Seminary and I had not quite finished reading the Bible. We had no financial support from any church and no mission board to send us and

cover us. We had no training for missions. When we arrived in Indonesia, I had only a one-month tourist visa, and did not speak the Indonesian language, although my wife did. At that time I had been a follower of Jesus Christ for two years.

Within two months we found ourselves on the primitive island of Indonesian Borneo. When we flew in to Borneo, we had no idea who was going to pick us up at the airport or what we were going to do after arriving. Why did we do these radical things? We went to Indonesia *by faith in the Lord* and *in obedience* to His commands.

The Lord was faithful. He opened the door for us to preach the gospel fruitfully in primitive unreached regions of Indonesia where the gospel had never been heard. We encountered people who worshiped idols and their ancestors, people who believed in and practiced witchcraft, and Muslims. When we shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with them, they demanded to see miracles. Why should they give up their treasured ancestral beliefs and believe on a “foreign god” they had never known, unless they saw convincing proof with their own eyes that this God was in fact greater or even the One True God? They suffered from demonic afflictions as well as from all kinds of physical infirmities. Could our Jesus deliver them?

I studied the Bible and also read books about supernatural healing written by ministers of the gospel. I needed to be able to perform miraculous healings in the name of Jesus Christ to prove to the people that He is the only way to the Father in heaven. Jesus had promised in John 14:12 that those who believe on Him would do the works that He did, especially healing the sick and casting out demons as confirmation of the gospel.

Through studying the Scriptures and plenty of “hands-on” experience in ministering to the infirm, I eventually became proficient and effective in healing the sick. How so? It was because the Lord had taught me mountain-moving faith, or faith of God. The Lord graciously made us fruitful during our nearly nine years in Indonesia, enabling us to preach the gospel, plant churches, and make many disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ. Today the Lord has graciously made us effective and fruitful in teaching others about faith of God for use in demonstrating the truth of the gospel to the lost through healing the sick.

Faith in God leads to obedience to God


As I look back, I see that in the beginning I started out with faith *in* God which led to *radical obedience* to God. Like Abraham, my wife and I obeyed the Lord’s command to “go,” leaving the comforts of our home country without the financial support of any church to proclaim the gospel in a foreign land where we knew no one when we first arrived. (Two years later, God raised up a church in New Jersey which supported us very generously and faithfully.)

The Lord gave us understanding of faith *of* God, and is moreover now using us to teach it effectively to other disciples of Jesus Christ, perhaps because many years

ago we had radical faith *in* God and demonstrated it by radical obedience to God's commands.

The Lord is pleased when his disciples have faith *in* him leading to obedience. To them he will give mountain-moving faith with which they will effectively exercise the authority that he gives over disease and demons. And they will be able to teach others in turn.

God

"faith in God"  to be like Him

Disciples of Christ

"faith of God"  to do His works

Disease & demons & flesh

When we have faith in God, we will be transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). We will become like Him. When we have faith of God, we will do the works that He did (John 14:12)---healing the sick and casting out demons for the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

We all know that *Jesus* can heal the sick. But he is no longer on earth in his physical body as before. The relevant question here is: can *you* heal the sick in His name as He has authorized us and commanded us?

Nothing will be Impossible for You

Luke 1:37 For nothing is impossible with God."

This is a favorite and much-loved verse that comes to the mind of believers when faced with an impossible situation. God will help us, for nothing is impossible for him.

But look at what Matthew's gospel says.

Matthew 17:20 ...if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. *Nothing will be impossible for you.*"

Do you believe this Scripture? Of course you will say yes. But do you see what it is saying? Not only is nothing impossible for God, but nothing will be impossible for those with faith as a mustard seed: mountain-moving faith!

This can shed new light on John 14:12 in which Jesus promises that “anyone who has faith in me *will do what I have been doing...*”

The Lord uses those who have mountain-moving faith---faith of God---to do the impossible on earth. Yes, he can of course do it all by himself from heaven without our help. But often he will choose vessels of clay like you and me to do the impossible.

Some practical considerations

It would be better not to start just with “big mountains” like terminal cancer. Such infirmities normally require great faith and authority to heal if God is willing. One might experience disappointment if we limit ourselves only to such difficult cases.

Therefore, start also with lesser infirmities which are “smaller mountains” and therefore easier to move into the sea. By successfully healing these, you will grow in confidence and be ready to move bigger mountains.

After you receive this teaching from the word of God, will you obey it? Or will you allow the spirit of fear to continue to paralyze you and cause you to disobey the Lord’s command?

The Consequence of Fear and Unbelief

Fear and unbelief ultimately lead to disobedience and rebellion against the Lord's commands. The results of that, in turn, can be disastrous for a believer.

Moses and the Israelites at the border of the Promised Land

After the Israelites were set free from slavery in Egypt, they headed immediately to the Promised Land. After arriving at the border of Canaan, Moses sent twelve spies in to explore the land.

Numbers 13:25 At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land. ...27 They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.

30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, *for we can certainly do it.*"

What kind of faith did Caleb have? He had none other than faith of God: "I know I can do it because I have been given the authority and the ability and the command from the Lord to do it." The other spies, on the other hand, would have none of it.

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are."

The spirit of fear and doubt

This is the familiar spirit of fear and doubt which tell us, "We can't do it." We can't do what we have been given the authority and the ability and the command from the Lord to do. We see therefore that faith of God and fear are polar opposites.

32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. ...All the people we saw there are of great size.

Numbers 14:6 Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes 7 and said, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 9 *Only do not rebel* against the LORD. And *do not be afraid* of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up.

Fear ultimately leads to rebellion against the Lord. There is no middle ground here. Either we die in the desert in rebellion to God, or we invade the Promised Land in

obedience to God. Faith of God leads to obedience, and fear leads to disobedience--
-rebellion against God.

10 But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. 11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people *treat me with contempt*? How long will they *refuse to believe* in me...? 12 I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them...

God wanted to destroy his own people

Fear and lack of faith ultimately lead to rebellion against the Lord. In God's sight, rebellion was tantamount to treating Him with contempt. We see here that the wages of treating God with contempt could have been destruction at His own hands. But Moses interceded for the flock.

Numbers 14:19 "In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." 20 The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked.

God graciously granted Moses his request and forgave the people; He would not wipe them out in the desert.

21 *Nevertheless*, 22 not one of the men who ... disobeyed me and tested me ten times— 23 ...No one who has *treated me with contempt* will ever see it.

Even though they had been forgiven, none of the men who disobeyed God and treated Him with contempt would enter the Promised Land. They would die in the desert.

24 But because my servant Caleb *has a different spirit* and follows me *wholeheartedly*, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.

But Caleb (and Joshua) did not have the spirit of fear and doubt which led the others to disobedience and rebellion. He followed God wholeheartedly. How does this apply to believers today? Let's look at the New Testament.

Application for New Testament believers

Hebrews 3:16 Who were they who heard and *rebelled*? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who *sinned*, whose bodies fell in the desert?

The Israelites, whom God delivered from slavery in Egypt, are a shadow of New Testament believers who have been delivered from slavery to sin by the blood of the Passover Lamb. Yet it is possible that the bodies of some if not many of these believers will “fall in the desert” and they will fail to enter the Promised Land. What does this mean to us?

18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, *because of their unbelief*.

New Testament believers can fail to “enter his rest” through disobedience. They disobey God because of unbelief. Unbelief leads to fear and doubt and eventual rebellion. The opposite of unbelief is FAITH: faith in God and faith of God.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, *let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it*.

We can fall short of entering God’s rest

We are warned to be *careful not to be found to have fallen short of entering his rest*. This clearly means there is a possibility of falling short. How is it possible that this could happen to New Testament believers? And what does it mean “to fall short”?

2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it *with faith*.

If we hear the gospel but do not combine it with faith, we can fall short. What kind of faith is being referred to here? It must refer to *faith in God* which should result in *faith of God*, the kind of faith that Caleb possessed. That “complete” faith will lead to obedience to God’s commands.

6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their *disobedience*.

Lack of faith and doubt ultimately result in disobedience.

11 Let us, therefore, *make every effort to enter that rest*, so that no one will fall by following their example of *disobedience*.

The importance of “complete” faith

We see that lack of faith and fear ultimately result in disobedience. Disobedience will keep us from entering God's rest. We are to *make every effort* to enter that rest. *Making every effort* clearly includes obedience to God's commands as a result of faith which is "complete"---faith *in* God plus faith *of* God.

Let us consider what it may mean for a New Testament believer to "fall short of entering God's rest." Whatever it may mean, we certainly do not want to fall short and to "die in the desert." But this may happen to many. Out of the many thousands of adult Israelite men whom the Lord saved out of Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered Canaan.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Luke 13:22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said to them, 24 "*Make every effort* to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

26 "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

27 "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

Fear and unbelief ultimately lead to disobedience and rebellion against the Lord's command to the Israelites to invade the Promised Land. What are God commands to New Testament believers?

Some important commands from the Lord for us

- love God
- live a holy life
- love and do good to others
- proclaim the kingdom of God, which includes healing the sick
- fulfill the Great Commission

The Lord *commands* us to be strong and courageous

Because of the unbelief and disobedience of the Israelites, Moses failed to lead them into Canaan. After Moses died, God appointed Joshua to lead the people into Canaan. This time there would be no failure. Look what God commanded Joshua:

Joshua 1:6 "*Be strong and courageous*, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 *Be strong and very courageous...*

...9 Have I not commanded you? *Be strong and courageous*. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Three times God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous. If we are going to be the Joshua generation which leads God's people to fulfill the Great Commission, we must be strong and courageous. It is not optional.

There may be times the enemy will seek to discourage you. You may see little results in the beginning. Or you may undergo trials of various kinds, even sickness. But remember the Lord's promise: "Do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

What is the basis for the laying on of hands?

We know that Jesus often laid hands on the sick as he healed them. What is the basis for this from Scripture? What was happening when he laid hands on the infirm?

Mark 5:24 ...A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and *touched his cloak*, 28 because she thought, "if I just *touch* his clothes, I will be healed."

This woman believed that if she just touched Jesus' cloak, she would be healed. We do not know how she came to believe this. Perhaps she had heard that others had been healed in that way. Scripture tells us that after she was healed by touching his clothes, many others were also similarly healed.

Mark 6:56 And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

What happened to the woman at the moment when she touched Jesus' cloak?

Mark 5:29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. 30 At once Jesus realized that *power* had gone out from him.

Healing power flowed from Jesus to the woman as she made physical contact with him by touching his cloak. Jesus evidently received this healing power from His Father when he was anointed at the Jordan River as the Holy Spirit came upon him. This power was resident in his body, explaining why Jesus laid hands on the sick to heal them. When he touched the infirm, that healing power would flow into them. The word for "power" in the Greek is "dunamis."

So why do believers also lay hands on the sick?

Jesus Christ now lives in his disciples through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Therefore when we lay hands on the sick in His name, His healing power can flow into them.

Just as Jesus realized that power had gone out from him, sometimes we can feel *His* healing power at work or going out when we lay hands on the sick. The person being healed might also feel the Lord's healing power at work. But it is not necessary to feel anything for the healing to take place.

Where should we lay our hands on the infirm person?

A common practice in some circles is to lay a hand on the infirm person's forehead when ministering healing, regardless of what kind of infirmity the person may have. In some cases this is followed by a gentle (or not-so-gentle) push. Is there a precedent for this in Jesus' ministry when he healed the sick? Let's examine the Scriptures.

Mark 7:32 There some people brought to him a man who was *deaf and could hardly talk*, and they begged him to *place his hand* on the man.

They begged Jesus to place his hand on the deaf-mute to heal him. Where did Jesus place his hands on him?

33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus *put his fingers into the man's ears*.

Why did Jesus perform this rather unusual action? It was likely because, being deaf, the man needed healing in the area of his ears. It is likely that Jesus simply wanted to be as efficient as possible in transferring the healing power directly to where it was needed. It can be shown that Jesus generally practiced placing his hands precisely on or over the physical infirmity whenever it could be localized. There is no evidence that there was any:

- massaging or squeezing or rubbing
- shaking or slapping or tapping or waving
- pushing or blowing on the person when he healed the infirm.

Therefore we should generally avoid such actions when healing the sick; they are not scriptural.

Then he spit and *touched* the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "*Be opened!*").

Why did Jesus touched the man's tongue? It was because the tongue is the primary organ of speech; or at least Jesus knew that his inability to speak was due to a problem with his tongue. Jesus touched the man's tongue so that healing power would flow directly and efficiently to the man's tongue. Jesus also spoke to the man's ears and commanded them to "be opened." Here we see Jesus performing the usual practice of both the laying on of hands as well as the exercise of authority by issuing a command.

Notice that Jesus also spit before touching the man's tongue. Although this practice is scriptural, we do not teach or encourage it for obvious reasons. (May the Lord

understand and be gracious to us in this regard.) But if the Lord tells you to spit, first ask permission from the person.

35 At this, the man's *ears were opened*, his *tongue was loosened* and he began to speak plainly.

We should follow this same pattern when ministering to those with hearing (and/or speech) problems. If they are wearing hearing aids, ask them to remove them. Insert your fingers all the way into their ears. Command them to be opened in Jesus' name. Sometimes they might have a deaf spirit which needs to be expelled. Then test their hearing. Repeat if necessary until the hearing has been restored to normal. In our experience it is sometimes not difficult to restore hearing loss. It is not considered a very difficult "mountain" to move.

Where did Jesus put his hands to heal a blind person?

Mark 8:22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to *touch* him.

The people begged Jesus to touch the blind man. Let's see where Jesus touched him.

23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and *put his hands on him*, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

Again, Jesus spit. This time it was on the man's eyes. Then he placed his hands on the man. We shall see below that it was directly on his eyes. Before we continue on, we note that Jesus asked the man, "Do you see anything?"

In the past, we would be hesitant to ask an infirm person if they were healed after we ministered to them. Why should we take the risk of asking such a question if we don't expect anything to happen? But Jesus did not hesitate to ask because he *expected* something to happen. The infirmity was under his authority and he expected it to submit to him. Now that we understand our authority and how to exercise it as Jesus did, we also are not afraid to ask if the people feel better after we lay hands on them.

Mark 8:24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

The man was only partially healed of his blindness. What was Jesus' response?

Did Jesus say to him, "God is teaching you patience"? Did Jesus say, "You must have some unconfessed sin"? Did Jesus say, "You must lack faith"? We are not saying that these cannot be valid reasons why people are not completely healed.

But Jesus made no such statements to this particular man. He simply laid hands on him a second time.

25 Once more Jesus put his hands *on the man's eyes*. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Again, we see Jesus putting his hands on the precise location of the infirmity---on the man's eyes.

Therefore, when you minister to the blind or visually-impaired, do what Jesus did. Put your fingers lightly on the person's eyes. Then command the eyes to be opened and the eyesight restored in the name of Jesus Christ. In the incident above, however, it is not recorded that Jesus gave any command at all. He only placed his hands on the man's eyes. Perhaps that explains why the healing was not complete the first time.

Sometimes you will need to minister more than once for the complete healing. *You will need to persevere and to continue giving the commands until the person is completely healed.*

Why was it that with Jesus the healings were usually very fast and seemingly instant? It was because Jesus had such great power and authority from the Father and such great faith. And he lived a life of obedience to the Father. We likely fall short of Jesus on all of these counts. That is why with us the healings are generally slower and take place step-by-step as in a process.

However, sometimes unconfessed sin can impede the healing *of a believer*. Common obstacles are unforgiveness and bitterness. When these are confessed, the believer can then be healed if it is in accord with the Lord's will. When you have difficulty ministering healing to a believer, consider the possibility that there is unconfessed sin.

Laying on of hands when driving out demons?

Jesus generally did not lay hands on the demonized when driving out demons. *Dunamis* using the laying on of hands (plus authority) is generally for healing physical infirmities, while demons are to be driven out with *authority* alone.

A testimony of persistence with mountain-moving faith

Carl trained with The Elijah Challenge in 2006, and is presently serving as a missionary and Senior Pastor of Baguio International Church in the Philippines, as well as Elijah Challenge Coordinator for the Philippines. He shared the following testimony in January 2009.

"I want to tell you a story about using The Elijah Challenge in the USA four years ago. We earned our Elijah Challenge and Way of the Master experience at home preaching on the streets of Houston, Galveston, and Dallas, Texas, and Mexico. These were our "Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria" before we went to "the ends of the earth" in Asia. (Acts 1:8)

My 84-year-old mother was a bedridden Alzheimer patient. She had not walked in over four months, and had not eaten solid food in over a month. The hospice people said she was dying. We drove a long distance to say our last goodbyes to her but I came with a plan to use God's authority and the name of Jesus to heal her.

After my family sang hymns, ministered to her and loved on her, they left the room in tears. There was a dark, palpable spirit of death in the room. I ministered the Elijah Challenge "A-bomb" to her for over an hour continuously, taking authority many times over her many symptoms---those I could remember or that she could tell me about. She experienced some gradual improvement in some lesser symptoms: headache, blurry vision, and weakness, etc. I also explained to her God's authority to heal her, while I rubbed lotion on her painful feet. I did this to show my love for her and so that she could believe also.

She was in and out of consciousnesses during this time. I continued speaking to her and rebuking the disease. I even rebuked the spirit of death many times.

Many, many times I continued to command healing to her from head to toe, and at the end of an hour she said she felt tingling and warmth in her legs. At that point, I commanded her to get up and walk in Jesus name! I helped her to her feet and walked her around her room. At first she walked slowly, but within five minutes with confidence and without help. She walked into the living room with me holding her hand (she said "I was her date") and continued on to the dining room table where she sat down. She announced, no longer whispering faint words, that she was hungry and wanted to eat "real food."

My shocked family could not believe what they were seeing. My mother's face was even glowing and had color. The deathly pallor was gone and her voice was strong.

My sister who is her caretaker said, "What did you do?" I told her, "God healed her." They made her dinner and she ate heartily and she followed it up with a big piece of pie. She then walked to a chair in the living room and sat down with my 3-year-old son, her grandson. They sat together, talked and watched TV; he was meeting her for the first time. After an hour she announced she was tired and wanted to go back to bed. We helped her from the chair and she walked back to bed for a nap.

The next day she was still walking around the house and eating by herself. She was actually getting into the refrigerator and frustrating my poor sister. When we left

for our long drive home she wanted to come out on the porch to see us off. We hugged her and left her standing at the door as we drove away.

That was four years ago. She went from her deathbed to a nuisance in about an hour because of the The Elijah Challenge A-bomb. My sister tells me that at 89 years old, she is going downhill again with Alzheimer's disease and is more in bed than out. However, she already has had four more years of life because of the authority and power of Jesus' name. She says now "she is tired and is ready to go home to the Lord."

Long story made short, don't give up. No one in my family believed after we viewed her terrible condition that she would live---let alone be healed. She was obviously dying; in fact, it was hard to keep from weeping at the sight of her. I still hoped and believed she could be healed. Someone who believes with "Mountain-Moving Faith" is more than enough for God. It took some perseverance but our God was and is faithful."

If you believe you will see the glory of the Lord." John 11:40

Ministering to People with Addictions

We do not see in the New Testament any specific instructions for ministering to those addicted to chemical substances like legal and illegal drugs, alcohol, and nicotine. However, we believe we can reasonably view such addictions as a *combination of chemical dependence and demonic bondage*. It is commonly known that the Greek word for witchcraft is *pharmakeia*. Persons who are addicted to drugs are likely under demonic power. They are not only addicted in the physical sense, but likely demonized by spirit beings as well. As such, drug addiction can be considered in part a *physical infirmity*.

Scripture teaches us how to minister both to those with physical infirmities as well as to those who are demonized. When we apply these principles to drug addicts, we can see them set free from their addictions. As just one testimony of this, a cocaine addict happened to be in attendance at an outdoor Evangelistic Festival being held in the Houston area. After the gospel was proclaimed, trained disciples healed the sick to demonstrate that Jesus in fact had authority to forgive sin in accordance with Mark 2:10-12. Along with several others who had physical infirmities, a man addicted to cocaine also came forward to be healed.

The trained disciples did the two things that Jesus generally did when he healed the sick and cast out demons. They laid hands on the gentleman. They rebuked the cocaine addiction and commanded it to leave in the name of Jesus Christ. (They may have cast out the demon of cocaine addiction as well.) During this time the gentleman felt something "physical" come out of his mouth and leave him. After that the desire for the cocaine completely left him. He came forward along with others and testified that Jesus had set him free from the addiction.

The "physical" thing that came out of his mouth was undoubtedly a demon spirit of addiction. The man then repented of his sin and decided to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

We conclude that through the laying on hands by the disciples this man had been healed of the physical component of the addiction. At the same time through the disciples' authoritative commands he had been delivered from the demon spirit which had caused him to crave after the drug.

We have witnessed and heard of similar results on other occasions as well. People have been successfully set free from alcohol and cigarette addiction in the same way.

After the person has been set free, it is imperative that he or she repent of sin, follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and be baptized. Otherwise, the spirit and the addiction will almost certainly return as Jesus taught in Luke 11:24-26. After they repent they should be taught what they are to do if and when the demon/addiction attempts to return. They themselves should be instructed in the use of authority to rebuke and drive away the spirit and the craving should they

return to tempt the person. The teaching which Jesus gave in Luke 17 about the relationship between a master and a servant is particularly useful. Without such follow-up teaching, the person will likely fall back into addiction.

Addictions to pornography and other “non-chemical” addictions

Although we have little personal experience in these areas, we are confident that the same principles apply to addictions to pornography and to other such addictive activities. Even though the ingestion of chemical substances is not involved, chemical changes are said to be involved at the physiological level when people engage in such activities.

There should first be conviction of sin leading to repentance. After that they can be set free through the laying on of hands and the use of authoritative commands. Then they should be instructed in the use of authority to resist any temptation to return to the sin.

Healing at a Distance

Jesus did not always lay hands on the infirm when ministering healing. There were occasions on which he healed the sick at a distance. What was the basis for this? Healing at a distance is based on pure authority. Let's review an incident we studied in an earlier chapter where Jesus healed the centurion's servant at a distance.

Luke 7:2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant...

Initially, the centurion wanted Jesus to come to his house to heal his servant. The centurion likely had in mind that Jesus would lay his hand on the servant.

...6 So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.

But then the centurion changed his mind about having Jesus come to his house. Perhaps it was because as a God-fearing gentile he knew that Jews were not to go into the home of a gentile. He would not trouble Jesus to come to his house.

7 ...But *say the word*, and my servant will be healed.

Say what word? What kind of understanding did the centurion have? Let's take a look.

8 For I myself am *a man under authority, with soldiers under me*. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Those in the military understand authority well

The military functions by the exercise of authority. Subordinates are expected to and in fact do obey the commands of their superior officers. In the case here, the centurion was under the authority of his commander who in turn had given him authority over his men. He had absolutely *no doubt* that his subordinates would carry out his commands immediately. When he barked out commands, it was with *faith of God*.

Moreover, authority is such that it is not affected by distance. A general can give a command to his soldiers face-to-face or at a distance, for example, by telephone. In either case his authority remains the same and his order will be carried out. The centurion understood this about authority and knew that Jesus also had authority, especially over infirmities and demons. And because of the nature of authority,

Jesus could command them from a distance and they would have to submit. Therefore the centurion realized that it was not necessary for Jesus to come to his house to heal his servant, presumably with the laying on of hands. Jesus could simply "speak the word" to the infirmity (or to the servant) and it would obey. The servant would be healed at a distance by Jesus exercising authority alone. "Authority" in Greek is "exousia."

10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well. 9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, *I have not found such great faith even in Israel.*"

Why was Jesus so emphatic about commending the faith of this man? Elsewhere in Scripture he would commend infirm people who came to him with *faith to be healed* and who had received their healing. But the centurion's faith exceeded all others. What kind of faith did he have?

As we have seen earlier, the centurion had not only *faith in God*, but also understood how to exercise authority with *faith of God*---with no doubt in his heart that his men would obey his commands. Perhaps "complete faith" involves having both *faith in God* and *faith of God*.

The relationship between authority and power for healing

Healing at a distance calls for the use of authority ("exousia"). The laying on of hands calls for the use of power ("dunamis") which is transferred through the laying on of hands. If possible, it is best to *both* exercise authority over the infirmity *as well as* to lay hands on the infirm person. Results are generally better when both approaches are used together rather than a single one by itself. Recall when Jesus laid his hands on a blind man in Mark 8 but without the use of authority, the man was only partially healed the first time. Only after Jesus laid his hands on the man's eyes a second time was he completely healed.

What is called "mass healing" can be understood as a special case of healing at a distance. Just as authority is not affected by distance, it is also not affected by number. A general can give an order to 10,000 soldiers under his command and all of them will obey him. Therefore you can minister healing at a distance to more than one person at a time.

Although "mass healing" is not found in Scripture, the principle behind it is based on the nature of authority. Jesus put to use this principle in healing the centurion's servant at a distance.

Tom Briggs & Open Air Seattle

Below is a February 2009 report we received from street preacher Tom Briggs in Seattle. At the end there is a striking testimony of healing at a distance.

"Joyfully I share with you some more encouraging testimonies of healings wrought in Jesus' name tonight in Tacoma, Washington at the weekly "Under The Bridge" homeless outreach!

Brother Thadeus and I went to give out gospel tracts, and minister healing to anyone who was willing to have us serve them. I rigged up a small sign on a pole with flashlights for nighttime visibility which read "FREE PRAYER FOR ILL-HEALTH AND PAINS."

Then I stood in the midst of the homeless street people who were milling around waiting for the food to be served by other local church groups. Eventually four people came up to us asking for healing. (Many more just read the sign and couldn't believe what they read, I think.)

A lady with a cast on her broken foot was healed and began walking without pain. She testified to onlookers that "it (our ministry) worked!"

A woman asked for ministry for her knee pain when she walked, and her cold-flu symptoms. After ministering authority to heal in Jesus' Name she walked without pain, and her sinus cleared 100% breathing and pressure relieved. She was very thankful and her two companions were amazed!

Another man came limping up to us. He had 4 broken ribs on his right side, two damaged painful knees, and his hip was hurting him. As people watched, Thad and I first laid a hand on each knee, healed them (the man did deep knee bends!), then I laid my hand gently on his ribcage and commanded the bones to mend and pain to go...

They did, and he proved it to the onlookers by twisting his body back and forth pain free!! He was totally healed! (He later came near and gave me a big smile and a "thumbs up"...still healed!)

Finally, this testimony was given us tonight from a father, Dave, who had asked us to minister "long distance" for his son's brain tumor last month at our first visit to the Bridge. The boy was at home as we exercised authority over the tumor with his dad from "under the bridge."

Dave greeted us happily tonight and told us what happened after our ministry to heal his son's tumor from a distance. He said he took his son to two different doctors, and neither doctor could find the brain tumor. Both doctors were confused and didn't know what was going on! They couldn't find the boy's brain tumor!

God had healed Dave's son who was at home many miles from "under the bridge" in Tacoma. Distance is no problem for Jesus' authority and Name to heal and save from sin and sin's curse!"

The Faith of the Infirm Person Seeking Healing

Let us now look at the factor of *the faith of the infirm person to be healed*. Up until now we have been focusing on the *faith of the one ministering the healing*. But the faith of the one being healed is also important.

Acts 14:8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.

Healing someone who is lame since birth, under normal circumstances, is tantamount to moving a very large mountain.

Acts 14:9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had **faith to be healed...**

There were likely other infirm people present during this gathering. Paul could see that one crippled man in particular had faith to be healed. We conclude from this that not everyone has faith to be healed. Now if the lame man had faith to be healed, why wasn't he healed as he sat there? Let's try to understand a possible reason.

A very high level of faith was necessary in order for him to be healed. But his level of faith "to be healed"---even though it was significant---was short of the amount needed. Therefore, Paul had to add some faith of his own so that the total amount of faith present would be sufficient.

10 *and called out, "Stand up on your feet!"* At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

What kind of faith did Paul add? He added mountain-moving faith. The man's faith in God to be healed plus Paul's faith of God were enough to result in the miracle. Therefore one person's faith can be *added* to another person's faith to result in a miraculous healing. Faith therefore can be additive; the more total faith, the better.

Unfortunately, this miracle did not result in people accepting Christ. Instead, it resulted in the people worshiping Paul as the Greek god Zeus. Eventually, the situation turned around and the people stoned Paul nearly to death. Not all miracles lead to the repentance of sinners. But they certainly make it more likely.

As we study their ministries, we might reasonably conclude that Paul as well as Peter looked for opportunities to heal the sick. The miracles often opened the hearts of sinners to the gospel. One could say that they were not acting solely on the basis of a "rhema" or a leading from the Lord, but on the command of the Lord to heal the sick for the sake of the gospel.

Negative faith

There can be infirm people with *no faith* or even *negative faith* for their healing. These can even be believers who do not believe that God will heal them. It is usually fruitless ministering healing to someone who has *negative faith* because their negative faith will subtract from your positive faith, and thus make the healing very difficult. This happened to Jesus in his hometown.

Mark 6:4 Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

It is possible to minister healing successfully to someone with no (or zero) faith to be healed. In such a case, the result may depend completely on your mountain-moving faith as you minister to him.

Broader authority in the context of preaching the gospel

Our authority in the context of proclaiming the kingdom of God is not simply over disease and demons, but may extend to other matters as well. There is an incident involving the apostle Paul which is worth examining in this regard.

Acts 13:6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.

Paul and Barnabas had an opportunity to advance the kingdom of God on the island by sharing the gospel with the proconsul, an official with authority over the island.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.

How did Paul deal this man who was obstructing the advance of the Kingdom of God? Our church background would normally have us pray to the Lord about such a situation, and then trust the Lord for the outcome. Some of us might even ask God to bless him since we are taught to love our enemies and to bless those who curse us (Luke 6:28).

9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 *"You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."*

Was this action from Paul's carnal anger or from the Holy Spirit? It was from the Holy Spirit who filled him at that moment to do what he did, which was essentially to put a "curse" on Elymas. We are taught not to curse, but to bless. How do we reconcile this with Paul's action? Let's first look at the outcome of Paul's action.

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Paul's malediction against Elymas came to pass. But how do we reconcile this with the command to "love your enemy"? Let's try to understand this.

For the sake of the kingdom of God we love our personal enemies, for example, those who are offended by us because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. For example, if your boss at work treats you unfairly because you follow Jesus Christ, you continue to submit to him and pray for him.

Now was Elymas a personal enemy of Paul?

10 *"You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery.*

Elymas was not a personal enemy of Paul, but an enemy of everything that is right, an enemy of God sent to stop the advance His Kingdom on that island. As a messenger of the gospel, Paul had a measure of authority to deal with this obstacle by removing it. He removed it in this instance not by praying, but rather by speaking forth with authority.

12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, *he believed*, for he was amazed *at the teaching* about the Lord.

Not surprisingly, the proconsul believed in Jesus Christ after seeing the amazing miracle. In the context of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, then, believers have a measure of authority to remove obstacles as the Holy Spirit leads.

However, we do not take such action lightly. "Cursing" should be relatively rare and only by the leading of the Holy Spirit and for the sake of the Kingdom of God, not for personal benefit or out of carnal anger. We have seen that disciples even have authority to rebuke storms when they hinder the advance of the Kingdom of God.

A storm rebuked in India

In 2000 I was in North India conducting an open-air evangelistic crusade. There were five meetings scheduled in all. The first three were attended by thousands of people and marked by many infirm people healed and putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

When I went to the grounds for the fourth meeting, the sky was very dark with heavy clouds. The wind was blowing hard, threatening to bring down the canopy covering the platform. Over the nearby hills I could see lightning punctuating the sky. A storm was imminent. By that time, people had already begun to gather on the grounds for the meeting. We began with singing praise songs.

Midway through the singing, one of the Indian host pastors came to me. He suggested that we dismiss the crowd after the singing. When the rain begins to fall, he reasoned with me, the crowd would scatter and run for cover. It would be more orderly simply to dismiss the crowd before the storm hit. But I told him that no, we should not dismiss the crowd. What did I have in mind?

The Lord had blessed the first three meetings, and the unhappy enemy wanted to disrupt this third meeting. I simply did not receive it. After the singing I mounted the platform and addressed the people. I told them that we would pray to the Lord and ask Him to remove the storm. Such a course of action would entail considerable risk. The fear would be God not answering our prayer in front of all the people. But I would not be deterred by fear and doubt.

I led the people in prayer to the Lord. After the prayer I opened my eyes and looked up at the threatening sky. With authority and faith of God I rebuked the approaching storm, the wind and the clouds in the name of Jesus in front of thousands of people. Now the risk was even greater than before. If after I rebuked the storm the rain still came down, I would be personally humiliated in front of the crowd.

But the Lord was gracious. The approaching storm split in two. Miles away on either side of us we could see the storm unleash its fury. But in between, our meeting was untouched. The crowd witnessed the miracle. Later I preached the gospel, and many people were healed and accepted Christ. At the very end as the people were testifying about God's wonderful grace, a slight drizzle began to fall. It was dew from heaven to bless us.

Similar miracles have been witnessed by other disciples elsewhere trained in the use of authority. The conclusion is that when we are engaged in the work of the kingdom of God, we have a measure of authority to remove obstacles which hinder its advance.

The Testimony of Emmanuel Abdullahi of Nigeria

Evangelist Emmanuel Abdullahi trained with The Elijah Challenge in Nigeria in November 2004. He is currently The Elijah Challenge Coordinator for Africa. Below is a report on an open-air evangelistic meeting where he ministered in December 2005.

"The Oshiri community is sold out to two powerful deities who they claimed are their gods. These deities claimed that they were protecting the land from invaders, and they manifested themselves in December with some spectacular signs that the community must take notice of. Dogs are the major animals that are sacrificed to this satanic deity. This community was loaded with stubbornness, deafness and epilepsy.

On the 8th of December was the first day of the meeting. There were about six thousand people in attendance at the market square named Eke Market. After praise and worship, I mounted the stage. I told them I am not a miracle worker, but I have come to introduce the miracle worker who is Jesus Christ, the greatest of all gods.

I preached on the topic "The Healing Jesus" and I ministered to the sick *en masse*, taking authority over demons of infirmity, sickness and diseases, and mentioning names of various sicknesses commanding them to go in the name of Jesus. I called out for those who were actually and completely healed, not those who were only getting healed. Over fifty people came out to testify of the Lord's mercy.

About five people testified that their short legs grew out as we tested them on the stage before everybody. Some testified of growths on their neck, stomach, and hand dissolving. Some who could not stand erect due to spinal cord injury could stand perfectly as we tested them.

People testified of epileptic seizures healed. I asked them how they knew. They said they saw beings coming out of their bodies forcefully as their bodies experienced electrical current. Still on the last day of the program I called them out to make sure that they were actually healed. I was told that the attacks and the symptoms never came back. They said they usually have attacks almost three times daily but after the first day of the program, no signs of those attacks again.

When the people were testifying some of the others were mocking me saying it was pre-arranged or manipulation.

On the second day which was Friday when I came up on stage I told them I would prove to them that it was not manipulation or a set-up. I said, 'bring me *all the deaf and the dumb*, I want to minister to them.'

They brought seven deaf and dumb people all of whom were known to the entire community. When they came forward the crowd shouted, 'Take them up to the stage so that everyone will see God healing them.'

I told the ushers to bring them on the stage.

MY FAITH DID NOT SHAKE AT ALL. [*What kind of faith is this?*]

I laid my hand on the first one and commanded the deaf and dumb spirit to leave, and it left in a second. We tested him and he repeated every word perfectly. The crowd shouted praising God.

After much praise and celebration, we discovered that the remaining six could hear without being ministered to when every one of them was tested. From that moment all mockery stopped. Every person in the meeting believed and rejoiced in God.

I then preached on breaking the power of witchcraft; after the message almost the entire community gave their life to Jesus. Many were weeping asking God for mercy as I led them to receive Jesus as their Lord and personal Savior.

Again I minister to the sick (*en masse*); the testimonies were outstanding as partially blind eyes were perfectly healed. People unable to walk who were brought to the crusade could walk without walking aids and many others testimonies were given.

On the third day a neighboring community heard that JESUS was in Oshiri doing wonders and miracles. They came *en masse* and we recorded about 10,000 people in attendance.

The whole crowd was committed to everything we were doing because they were convinced. A large number of people were healed on the last day, and we couldn't collect all the testimonies.

I was called yesterday on the phone to be informed that miracles of healing are still taking place on their own even without anybody ministering to them and that every home has a spectacular miracle which they cannot deny.

I was able to train over fifty ministers and believers over two days in the morning. Thank you for training me to train others."

At present, Emmanuel spends most of his time training other servants of God how to heal the sick and cast out demons using authority and faith of God for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

How to Answer Skeptics

There are some “difficult” passages we find in Scripture which skeptics use to refute the teaching of miraculous healing in preaching the kingdom of God. If we interpret Scripture properly we will see that there are answers. Below are two examples.

Example I:

Matthew 12:39 He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! *But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*”

This verse is used to teach that the Lord is not pleased to give miraculous signs like supernatural healing. The only sign the Lord would give is the death of Christ on the cross and his burial symbolized by the three days that Jonah spent in the belly of the fish.

Example II:

John 20:29 “...blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

This Scripture is used to argue that it is more pleasing to the Lord if someone believes in Jesus without witnessing a miraculous healing than if he had first witnessed a miracle.

Explanation for Example I:

To understanding the context of the Scripture cited in Example I, let us back up and look at the preceding verses.

Matthew 12:22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

After Jesus performed the miracles of healing the blind and the mute, the people were wondering if he might be the Son of David---the promised Messiah. Jesus in fact performed miracles primarily to draw the people to himself as the Jewish Messiah (John 20:30-31). His healing the blind and mute man was clearly fulfilling the purpose of the miracles.

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”

By contrast, the Pharisees were not impressed and did not believe that the miracles were from God. Instead they said that Jesus had used the power of Satan. For these self-righteous hypocrites the purpose of the miracle was not fulfilled.

... Matthew 12:38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."

Their request was strange because Jesus had in fact just healed a blind and mute man. They had already rejected that miracle as a testimony that Jesus was sent by God. And now they were requesting another miracle from him. It is clear that their stubborn hearts were hardened and that their minds had already been made up regardless what miracle Jesus would perform for them. And so we can understand perfectly why Jesus replied to them in the way that he did.

39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! *But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*

A parallel incident is recorded in Mark 8:6-12.

Explanation for Example II:

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The proper interpretation of this verse hinges on the object of the clause "blessed are those who have not seen." Blessed are those who have not seen what? Is the object to be understood as the miraculous healings which Jesus performed? No. The antecedent pronoun "me" earlier in the sentence makes it very clear that the proper object is Jesus himself in resurrected form. Clearly, Jesus meant to say, "blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed." Almost as if anticipating any objections to miraculous healing, Scripture goes on to say:

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

It is clear that Jesus performed miracles---and perhaps most of these were miraculous healings and deliverances---expressly to convince sinners to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have eternal life. There was no stigma on a person if he believed after seeing a miracle done by Jesus.

With experience and understanding of Scripture, you should be able to answer nearly every question or objection. When you have no answer, just say so honestly--it will be appreciated.

The question of taking medicine or being treated medically

In our view, there need be no conflict between miraculous healing and medicine or medical treatment. Medicine and medical treatment for life-threatening conditions should be not discontinued until the healing is confirmed by a physician.

Arguments against receiving medicine or medical treatment are usually based on:

Mark 11:24 ...Therefore I say to you, All things, whatever you ask, praying, believe that you shall receive them, and it will be to you.
(Modern King James Version.)

First of all, the teaching against using medicine is usually directed toward infirm believers who want to receive their healing from the Lord. With this approach, the burden of responsibility is on the infirm believer to have faith to receive their healing. Faith here means that after you have asked God for your healing, you must first believe that you will receive it or have already received it, depending on the particular translation you are using. If you meet that condition, then you will receive your healing from the Lord. If you do not receive your healing from the Lord, then it is because you doubted that you were healed or would be healed. Let's examine this teaching within the context of Mark 11:24 and in light of other Scripture.

Mark 11:20 And passing on early, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered away. 22 And answering Jesus said to them, Have faith of God. 23 For truly I say to you that whoever shall say to this mountain, Be moved and be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he said shall occur, he shall have whatever he said. 24 *Therefore I say to you, All things, whatever you ask, praying, believe that you shall receive them, and it will be to you.* (Modern King James Version).

We see that the context of Jesus' words was the incident of his cursing the fig tree. Jesus was teaching Peter how he had performed such a powerful miracle. It was by commanding the tree with faith of God. If one commands a mountain to move into

the sea without doubt in one's heart and believing that what one says to the mountain will happen, it will be done for him. Immediately after that Jesus says, "Therefore I say to you, All things, whatever you ask, praying, believe that you shall receive them, and it will be to you."

We see that the context is not about receiving healing from God. Rather it has to do with moving mountains with faith of God. If we have been given authority, we use that authority by issuing commands with faith of God. If in this context we wish to pray to the Lord and ask for the mountain to be moved, we believe that we will receive what we ask and that the mountain will in fact be moved. Then we command the mountain to move with faith of God and without doubt. The teaching is not about receiving healing from God, but rather about the conditions we must satisfy in order to move "mountains" which include diseases and demons.

With The Elijah Challenge approach, the primary responsibility for the healing is not on the infirm believer. The responsibility is instead on the disciple of Christ who is ministering healing to an infirm person who might not be a believer. Non-believers generally do not pray to God to ask for healing, or anything else for that matter. They are not required to "prove their faith" by refusing to receive medical treatment. Instead, trained disciples minister miraculous healing to them by exercising authority with faith of God. It could be their miraculous healing in fact which brings them and others who hear about the miracle to saving faith in Jesus Christ. This is what happened in Acts.

The gospels do indicate that the sick came to Jesus with faith to be healed. Scripture records Jesus commending people for their faith which resulted in their miraculous healing. But this had little to do with the question of taking medicine or receiving medical treatment. The healings were usually performed on the spot and Jesus did not have to warn the people against medical treatment. In The Elijah Challenge our goal is to teach disciples how to use their mountain-moving faith to heal the sick as Jesus did---in a relatively quick fashion if possible. The faith of the infirm person does not arise as a primary factor, and thus the question of medical treatment is not significant.

Because the Church today has forgotten how to heal the sick as Jesus taught and commanded his disciples, we now teach believers to pray to God to heal them and then to prove their faith to Him by refusing medical treatment. This was not how it was done in the gospels or in Acts. But the Lord is now restoring the understanding of healing the sick to the Church.

Finally, there may also be legal liabilities to those involved if a person dies as a result of the lack of or the withholding of medical treatment.

How did Paul Minister to the Sick?

We have studied how Jesus healed the sick, and how he taught his disciples to heal the sick. In Acts we saw how Peter healed the sick by continuing to use authority, although the gift of healing began to be manifest as well. (We shall examine the gift of healing in Acts later.) Now let us turn our attention to the apostle Paul. Did he minister to the sick differently from what Jesus taught?

Acts 28:7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. 8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, *after prayer*, placed his hands on him *and healed him*. (NIV)

We see here Paul performing two separate actions. According to the New International Version, first there was prayer to God. After the prayer, Paul laid his hands on him and healed him. Again we see a familiar pattern: there was first prayer which was separate and distinct from the actual action of healing the man. The action of healing took place through the laying on of Paul's hands. Notice that here Paul decided not to issue a command. Was it because he did not believe that he had been given authority to heal the sick or was ignorant of this authority? To answer this, let's study how Paul dealt with demons.

How did Paul cast out demons?

Acts 16:16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and *said to the spirit*, "*In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!*" At that moment the spirit left her.

- Did Paul say, "*Father*, in the name of Jesus Christ, I command this demon to come out of her"? No, Paul did not address the Father at that moment.
- Did Paul speak in tongues? No, it is not recorded that Paul spoke in tongues here when casting out the demon. Instead he spoke directly to the demon and commanded it to come out of the girl because he knew his authority over such demons.
- Did Paul engage in any priestly action directed up to Jesus or the Father? No, there was no priestly action at all, such as praying, thanksgiving, or praising Jesus or the Father.

- It was purely an authoritative kingly action directed at the demon. Because the demon was under Paul's authority, it obeyed his command and left the girl.

We see that Paul did in fact understand and use authority when dealing with demons. It is clear then that Paul healed the sick and cast out demons very much according to the pattern that Jesus taught and that Peter followed in Acts. The pattern taught by Jesus is what believers are to follow today when engaged in the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

What about Paul and the handkerchiefs?

Acts 19:11 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Paul is clearly not using authority to perform these miracles, for there is no record of Paul issuing commands to the diseases and demons. What is in operation is not authority, but *power*.

As we shall see later in greater detail, the Father gave to Jesus power and authority over diseases and demons. This likely took place at the Jordan River when Jesus was baptized in the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, power is *dunamis* while authority is *exousia*. We have seen that *exousia* is generally exercised by issuing commands. But *dunamis*, insofar as healing is concerned, is quite different. It is applied through physical contact via the laying on of hands. This is precisely why Jesus often laid his hands on the infirm when he healed them. We shall see later that healing *dunamis* was transferred when Jesus touched the infirm.

The apostle Paul was a servant of God in whom dwelt Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Therefore the healing power, the *dunamis* which is in Christ, was also in Paul. He used this *dunamis* to heal the sick as he did when he laid his hands on the father of Publius in Acts 28 above.

We shall see in a later chapter that on some occasions, infirm people were healed when they touched Jesus' clothes. In Mark 5 a woman with persistent bleeding was healed when she touched his cloak. Healing power or *dunamis* came out of Jesus into her through her physical contact with him when she touched his cloak. Somehow the *dunamis* was transferred to the clothes he wore by contact with his physical body.

In the same way, handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched the apostle Paul received the *dunamis*. This healing power was then transferred to the infirm and demonized to set them free when the handkerchiefs were placed on them. Interestingly, it was not the application of *exousia* or authority that drove out the demons, but simply *dunamis* or power. These were extraordinary miracles indeed.

We see then that these miracles through Paul can be understood as the application of a simple principle with which we are already familiar---the transfer of healing power through the laying on of hands. There is nothing new in the healing ministry of Paul that we have not already studied.

How can we Grow in Mountain-Moving Faith?

We know that authority over diseases and demons must be exercised with mountain-moving faith. Therefore the more the faith, the more proficient we are in healing the sick. Let's see how Jesus taught his disciples to grow in mountain-moving faith.

Luke 17:1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. 2 It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. 3 So watch yourselves.

Even though sin can be forgiven by God, it nevertheless can have painful earthly consequences. In a well-documented account in Scripture, we read how David suffered because of his sin with Bathsheba leading to the murder of her husband Uriah. This suffering extended to his sons and family. Therefore Jesus commands us to watch ourselves with regard to people or things which cause us to sin.

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.

Jesus focuses on the difficulty we all have in forgiving others. He commands us to forgive those who hurt or sin against us, especially if they repent. This is brought out emphatically in other Scriptures as well, for example, in the Lord's Prayer and in Mark 11:25. There the offending person is not even required to repent before we forgive them. Given our human nature, however, forgiving others from our hearts is very difficult. Our flesh gets in the way. We get angry and hurt. It is difficult for us to let that person go, and easier instead to nurse a grudge. But there is much more we are commanded to do.

4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

The Lord commands us to do the impossible

It is highly unlikely that the same person will sin against us seven times in a single day. What is the point here? Jesus is making use of hyperbole to teach us that no matter how many times someone hurts or sins against us, we are to forgive them, especially if they repent. Forgiving someone from your heart just once is difficult enough, and forgiving someone multiple times in a single day is virtually impossible for us. Jesus here is commanding us to do that which is impossible and against our human nature. It is, shall we say, *beyond our faith*. The reaction of the apostles below is understandable.

Luke 17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, "*Increase our faith!*" 6 He replied, "*If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this*

mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and *it will obey you*.

Jesus immediately reminded them about "faith as a mustard seed." Recall from our earlier study of Matthew 17:20 that faith as a mustard seed can move mountains. Functionally, it is equal to mountain-moving faith. If we have that kind of faith, a mulberry tree will *obey* our command to be uprooted and planted in the sea.

I was told by a friend who is a biologist that a mulberry tree, by its very nature, grows in fresh water and cannot survive in salt water. Therefore it is impossible to transplant a mulberry tree to the salt water of the sea (let alone move it into the sea by a verbal command). Such an action would be against its very nature.

But Jesus teaches us that if we have the faith of a mustard seed, we can do the impossible---that which is against the very nature of things. Faith of a mustard seed is functionally equivalent to mountain-moving faith. If we have mountain-moving faith, the mulberry tree will *obey* our command. Let's focus on the concept of obedience.

How to treat your servant

Who is it who obeys another? Among other things, a servant obeys his master. Jesus went on to teach his disciples about the relationship between a master and his servant. In some cultures in the world today, especially in western countries, there are few people who can afford to have servants. However, in the time of Jesus, masters and servants were part of the society and the culture. Let's pretend that you lived two thousand years ago in the Middle East, and that you were a person of means with servants.

Luke 17:7 "Suppose one of you had *a servant* plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'?

Your servant has been working hard all morning in the fields. You are the master of the house and have been busy at home looking after business affairs. Around noon he appears at the door, tired from hours of labor. Imagine the following scenario. You meet him at the door and say:

"Oh, you poor servant. You've been working so hard for me. You must be absolutely exhausted. Come in! Have a seat at the dining table here! I'll go into the kitchen and prepare a tasty meal for you. When it's ready, I'll bring you the food and serve you. We can eat together!"

Such a thing would never take place between a master and a servant. A master will never offer to serve a meal to his servant. That is the nature of the relationship between a master and his servant. The master never serves the servant. Instead he gives orders to the servant and the servant obeys immediately.

8 Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'?

A master will command his servant, even if he is tired when he comes in from the field, to prepare supper for him. When the master sits down to eat, the servant stands nearby and waits on him. Only after the master finishes eating does the servant sit down to satisfy his hunger on the leftovers. That is the nature of the relationship between a master and a servant.

A master will not coddle or spoil his servant as he might his own child. The master never serves or obeys the servant; instead the servant must serve and obey the master. In short, the master treats his servant strictly and even harshly.

9 Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?

Moreover, a master does not thank his servant just because he does what he is told. The master *expects* him to obey. The servant is simply doing what he should be doing. This is what Jesus taught the apostles when they asked him to "increase their faith." How does understanding the relationship between a master and servant increase our faith?

How to grow in mountain-moving faith

Disciples of Jesus Christ have certain things under their authority. That means that these things must obey us and submit to us. We know that in the context of evangelism, infirmities and demons must submit to us. And there is another thing which is also under our authority: our flesh---our sinful nature.

Before we came to know Jesus Christ as our Lord, we were in daily submission to our fleshly nature. Since it ruled over us, we sinned everyday; we were sinners. But after Christ became our Lord, our sins were forgiven and our sinful nature was put to death and is now under our authority. Now it no longer rules over us. Although it is not completely dead in that it can tempt us to sin, we are no longer forced to submit to it since it is now under our authority. It can now be compared to a servant. Let's now examine the relationship between us and our flesh. It should be similar to the relationship between a master and a servant.

Let's say that you are the wife of an elder in a big church, and that you are also the treasurer of that church. One day a new couple starts attending your church. They begin to attend the Bible Study you hold in your home. Eventually, you become close to the wife and begin to disciple her. She gets to know you quite well. Unfortunately she has a weakness which she has not yet been able to overcome---she has a habit of gossiping. After getting close to you she now has a ripe and prominent target for her gossiping---you, the wife of an elder and the treasurer of a big church. Because of your position, jealousy has slowly sprouted in her heart. Before she knows it, this immature believer gives in to her old ways.

She starts to talk to other ladies in the church about you. It starts out seemingly innocently, but one day she tells another woman in the church that she thinks she saw you flirting with another man after a meeting. It gets worse. She spreads gossip among the ladies that the nice new car that you and your husband just purchased just might have been partly paid for with church funds you had access to because of your position. But it's pure slander.

One of the ladies in the church is very concerned when she hears the accusations. She calls you on the telephone to share with you what is being said about you. As you are listening to her, your servant "has come back from the fields and is knocking on the door." By your servant, we are referring to your flesh.

You go to the door, and there stands your servant. She says to you, "how do you feel about what that woman spread in the church about you? You should be extremely shocked and hurt. What an evil person she is. You should explode in anger and bitterness toward her. She has slandered your reputation beyond repair."

What would you say to your servant?

"Yes, you're absolutely right. What a good servant you are! Come in and take a seat; you must be so hungry after working so hard for me. I'll prepare a meal for you and serve you. I'll sit down and eat with you. Tell me what I should do to that horrible woman. I'll do it."

If we respond to our servant in that way, we will likely end up sinning against the Lord. We will be inviting the spirit of anger and bitterness to control us. We will not be able to forgive her as the Lord commands us. Instead we will be under submission to our flesh. We will not be able to handle the situation wisely.

So what *should* you say to your servant when she is knocking on your door?

"No! I rebuke you! I will not do what you say. No, you are my servant and you will listen to me and obey me. I will obey the Lord and forgive her. As for you, you go back to the field and work some more. NOW GO!"

That is the way you should treat your servant. You do not serve her, you are not gentle with her, you do not obey what she tells you to do. Instead, you command her and order her *with authority and mountain-moving faith*. If you know how to do this, then she will back off and submit to you. And you will escape from temptation; you will be able to forgive. You will be able to do that which is impossible and contrary to human nature.

Notice the similarities between how we treat infirmities and demons on the one hand, and how we should treat our flesh on the other hand. We rebuke and command infirmities and demons with authority and mountain-moving faith. This is

how disciples of Jesus Christ should also be treating the works of their flesh. These are servants who must submit to our strict commands.

The sin of lust

The works of our flesh of course are not limited to unforgiveness. As another example, many men have the weakness known as lust. In particular, there are likely many Christian men who have a problem with pornography. In more and more countries in the world, it is increasingly easy for men to view pornography on the internet. How can we deal with such a weakness?

Lust of this kind is simply another servant which must submit to those who have crucified their flesh and follow Jesus Christ. Just as women can rebuke their servants who show up at their door to tell them to get angry and bitter, men can do likewise when their servant knocks on their door and tempts them to take a lingering peek at pornography.

Let's say you are a leader in your church. During your college days you kept stacks of pornographic magazines under your bed in obedience to your master---the one we call lust. But now that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, you have repented. Lust is not longer your master, but a servant in submission to you.

One day while you are checking your email, you receive a strange message with an interesting subject line from someone you know. Curious, you open the message, and pornographic images of impossibly beautiful women explode before your eyes. At that moment your servant is at your door. He tells you that it's perfectly alright for you to let your eyes feast for a few moments. After all, you're a man, aren't you? And besides, the Lord will forgive you if you simply confess it to him later. Remember that he died on the cross for you. A few more moments of enjoyment won't hurt...

The way in which you respond to your servant will determine whether you fall into sin or you escape from temptation. If you meekly listen and submit to him, you will commit the sin of lust and may even find yourself again controlled by the spirit of pornography. But if you rebuke him with authority and mountain-moving faith, he will submit to you and back off. If you have mountain-moving faith, nothing will be impossible for you. You will be able to do that which is impossible for the natural man---to live a holy and pure life.

It is possible to live a holy life

In addition to unforgiveness and lust there are many other works of our flesh as well. We are different from one another and have different weaknesses. But whatever our weakness is, if we know our authority over it and how to exercise that authority, we can keep from sinning. The Lord teaches us how to live a life which is holy and pleasing to God.

Luke 17:10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

The same thing applies to us who are servants of Jesus Christ. We are under his authority just as infirmities, demons, and the works of our flesh are under our authority. When we obey the Lord by healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the gospel, and living holy lives, we should not feel that we are special or have accomplished something great. This is because the authority is from the Lord, the faith is from the Lord, and the kingdom and glory are unto the Lord. We have done no more what we were told to do---we are just "unworthy servants."

As we submit to the Lord and obey His commands, our servant (our flesh) submits to us. As we submit to the Lord, diseases and demons must submit to us as we share the gospel. If you want mountain-moving faith to drive out diseases and demons, learn to subdue your flesh through mountain-moving faith.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 *It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions,* and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

The grace of God now teaches us how to say "no" to our servant. We rebuke him with authority and mountain-moving faith. We are strict and harsh toward him.

Make your Body your Slave

Paul was acknowledged as perhaps the greatest of all the apostles. He was used by God to perform extraordinarily powerful miracles. He had perhaps more revelation and was more fruitful than any other apostle. All would agree that he was a holy man of God. Yet, read what he wrote...

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

What was this prize mentioned by Paul? It is a matter of interpretation what he meant. But it is clear that we servants of God want to win the heavenly prize, whatever it may mean. No disciple of Jesus Christ wants to be disqualified. How do we win this prize? We must run *in the right way*.

25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into *strict training*. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Olympic athletes subject their bodies to the strictest regimen of long hours of strenuous exercise, and of diet and rest. We servants of God are to do the same in the spiritual sense. We are to be very strict with our flesh.

26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, *I beat my body and make it my slave* so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Even someone so close to the Lord as Paul was concerned about the possibility of being disqualified for the prize. And so he does not run his race in just any fashion. That would disqualify him. Instead he "beats his body and makes it his slave." Does this mean that he beat himself physically? No, he is talking about his flesh---the works of his flesh.

He beats his flesh; he treats it strictly and harshly. He makes it submit to him as a servant or a slave would submit to his master. In this way he will not submit to his flesh when it tempts him to sin against God.

Exactly how can we be disqualified from the prize?

Disqualification can be the consequence of sinning against God. Immediately in the next verses, Paul reminds us of how the Israelites sinned against God in the desert. We know that they were disqualified from the prize of entering the Promised Land, and that all of them died in the desert except Caleb and Joshua.

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

Out of the many thousands of Israelite men over twenty years old whom God brought out of Egypt, only two of them succeeded in entering the Promised Land. Of course it goes without saying that every disciple of Jesus Christ wants to "enter the Promised Land."

1 Corinthians 10:6 Now these things occurred as examples [or types] *to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.* 7 *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry."*

Colossians 3:5 Put to death ... sexual immorality, impurity, lust, *evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

What happened to the Israelites in the desert is a warning for New Testament believers today. If we set our hearts on evil things, we will not enter the Promised Land; we will be disqualified from the prize. Paul first mentions the sin of idolatry. It is taught that a so-called Christian, while not physically bowing down before an idol, can still be worshiping an idol in his heart. In Colossians, Paul teaches that greed is in fact idolatry. With the popular teaching today that "God wants you materially rich on earth," there are Christians and even ministers who are now guilty of idolatry in God's sight. This disqualifies the Christian from the prize.

1 Corinthians 10:8 *We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.*

New Testament believers who commit sexual immorality will be disqualified from the prize. If they repent of their sin and stop committing immorality, they can be forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, God also forgave the Israelites who sinned in the desert after Moses interceded for them. Nevertheless, they all died in the desert and failed to enter the Promised Land. We should be careful not to take advantage of God's grace by intentionally sinning knowing that God will forgive us if we just confess the sin.

9 *We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.* 10 *And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.*

New Testament believers who test the Lord and who grumble against Him can be disqualified from the prize.

11 These things happened to them as examples [or types] and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

A strict warning

The example of what happened to the Israelites in the desert has direct application to New Testament believers. It is a warning to us.

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

According to Paul, it is possible for a New Testament believer to fall. Whatever falling may mean here, any sincere and committed believer will not want to enter this danger zone. We can fall by allowing our flesh to rule over us and sinning against the Lord. Holiness is not optional if we do not want to fall.

Again, it is not absolutely clear what is meant by:

- being disqualified from the prize
- failing to enter the Promised Land
- failing to enter God's rest
- dying in the desert
- falling

But it is clear that we should not want it to happen to us.

What then must we do?

We must live holy lives. *We beat our servants by exercising authority over our flesh and rebuking it with mountain-moving faith when it tempts us to sin We obey God's commands by the power of the Holy Spirit in us.*

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but *if by the Spirit you put to death* the misdeeds of the body, you will live...

Colossians 3:5 *Put to death*, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: *sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.* 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: *anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

As we exercise authority over our earthly nature with mountain-moving faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can put it to death.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. *Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

The enemy may try to bring you down through sin

If you begin to heal the sick and cast out demons for the sake of the gospel, the enemy will seek to bring us down. He may very well use the weakness of our flesh to cause us to sin. Therefore, servants of God must know how to use their authority to put to death the misdeeds of the body so that we will not be disqualified from the prize.

As you exercise your authority over disease and demons, be sure that you also exercise your authority *over your flesh* so that you may live a holy life. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to live a holy life. Our flesh no longer rules over us; we rule over it by the Holy Spirit.

Must you be in good health to minister healing to others?

We all want to be in good health. However, is it a requirement to be in good health or to be healed from an infirmity before we can minister healing to others? This is a valid question to which should be given some careful thought. To answer this question, let us consider the prophet Elisha.

Elisha was a very powerful servant of God who ministered with the double portion of the spirit of Elijah. Even a cursory examination of his ministry reveals the many and various miraculous signs God did through him, including the raising of the dead and the healing of the infirm. Obviously Elisha had great faith. One day he himself fell ill with some undisclosed sickness.

2 Kings 13:14 Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. ...20 Elisha died and was buried.

Even though Elisha was a mighty man of faith, for some reason God did not heal him. We can reasonably assume that Elisha wanted to be healed and had asked God to heal him. But nevertheless he died of the illness. We learn that even if we are mightily used by God to minister healing to others, it does not mean that we ourselves are immune to sickness. There is no hard and fast correlation between our personal health and ministering healing to others.

2 Kings 13:20b Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. 21 Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

Surprisingly, even though the prophet himself died from an illness, his remains were used by God to bring a newly deceased man back to life. We can conclude from this brief study of Elisha that it is not necessary to be in good health in order to minister healing to others.

In the New Testament there is also another possible example of this. It's known as "Paul's thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Although there is no consensus that this thorn was in fact a physical infirmity, the language used does allow for this possibility. Like Elisha, the apostle Paul was a man mightily used of God in miraculous signs, including healing the sick. But he himself suffered from a possible physical infirmity that would not go away.

The authority to heal the sick and cast out demons is in the realm of your spirit, while any physical infirmity is in your body. These two areas do not necessarily intersect, although it's possible that they could affect one another in some peripheral way.

Be a good steward of your physical body

Our physical body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Generally, when we are in good physical health we can serve the Lord more effectively. Therefore we should give some attention to the proper maintenance of our body. Let us be good stewards of the body the Lord has entrusted to us in which we live and through which we serve Him on earth.

We should exercise self-control when it comes to eating. Today there is much understanding about what is healthy and what is not healthy. We should apply this knowledge in order to maximize our physical strength and endurance for the sake of service to our Lord Jesus Christ. Related to this is the role of fasting not only for spiritual reasons, but for reasons related to physical health as well. We should consider fasting from foods that we might like, but which are not good for our health.

1 Timothy 4:8 For physical training *is of some value*, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Although godliness for sure has much more value, physical training is of *some* value. Therefore we should devote some time and attention to exercise as a means of maintaining our temple. The Lord has given us a race on earth to run. That race includes our spirit, our soul, and our body. If our body gives out before we finish the race, it may mean that we go home prematurely---before the Lord's time. It is our personal responsibility to keep our bodies in good running condition. If we fail in this responsibility due to lack of self-discipline, we will not finish the race as well as we could have.

In addition to proper diet and exercise, our bodies also need physical rest.

Among those who serve the Lord, there is a decided lack of self-control and self-discipline in terms of how we care for our physical bodies. Let us repent of being poor stewards of God's temple. Let's provide a good example for other servants of God.

The Gift of Healing

We have seen that the gift of healing is distinct from the authority to heal in at least four ways. Firstly, the authority came before the gift which was available at the earliest on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended. Secondly, the authority was given for evangelizing the lost in the gospels, while the gift is primarily for ministering healing to infirm believers. (Authority can, however, also be used to minister to believers.) Thirdly, every disciple has a measure of authority to heal the infirm, whereas not everyone has the gift of healing. Finally, the *operation* of the gift differs from the *operation* of authority.

When exercising authority, a good degree of effort is expended. *We are moving a mountain into the sea; we heal the sick by issuing authoritative commands. Sometimes we may perspire in the effort. In contrast, operating in the gift of healing may require very little effort.*

Acts 5:11 Great fear seized *the whole church* and all who heard about these events. 12 The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders *among the people*. And *all the believers* used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 *No one else dared join them*, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women *believed in the Lord* and were added to their number. 15 *As a result*, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

Acts here is describing events happening *among the believers in the Church*. Many new people had been added to their number. In response to this, the Lord gave Peter a very powerful gift of healing to minister to the believers. With this gift Peter is clearly not exercising authority by issuing commands. Rather, as he moves about and his shadow touches the sick, God---not Peter---heals them. Peter himself expends very little effort.

In our earlier examinations of the healings performed by Peter, it was specifically mentioned that afterwards people believed on the Lord. But here there is no such mention, perhaps because the people were already mostly believers. That is why Peter is ministering with the gift of healing here.

Often new believers may need to be set free from the tormenting evil spirits from their past. Evangelicals often assume that demons will leave automatically when a person accepts Christ. But Scripture does not specifically teach this. Rather it teaches that demons normally need to be deliberately cast out in the name of Jesus Christ by a disciple. There will of course be exceptions to this.

There are different manifestations or forms of the gift of healing. Young's Literal Translation renders the phrase in 1 Corinthians 12:9 as "gifts of healings." Other forms of the gift of healing might include:

- God healing an infirm person after prayer alone in its various forms.
- God healing an infirm person as someone worships the Lord or leads worship.

In general, the gift of healing can be in operation as God heals in response to priestly activities performed by disciples. (This statement, however, is not corroborated by any Scripture since the New Testament is mostly silent on exactly how the gift of healing operates apart from the account of Peter's shadow.) The authority to heal, by contrast, is in operation when a disciple issues a command to an infirmity or infirm person with mountain-moving faith.

Differences between healing unbelievers and believers

For ministering to non-believers there are generally no requirements the Lord places on them to be healed other than having an open heart. Their willingness to be ministered to usually signifies their openness or even faith to be healed. Believers, on the other hand, must first confess their sins to one another according to James 5:16 before the Lord will heal them; they are accountable to God.

Ministering Healing to Believers

Now we turn to ministering healing *not* in the context of evangelism, but rather in the more familiar context of building up the body of Christ. When believers fall ill, many Bible-believing churches will minister to them according to James 5:14-16.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Verse 15 assures us that the prayer offered in faith *will* make the sick person well and that the Lord *will* raise him up. The language of this verse gives us strong hope for healing and recovery from the infirmity.

Why are so few miraculously healed?

Unfortunately, this hope has not been fulfilled in the great majority of cases where we minister to infirm believers according to current understanding of James 5. Why is God's clear promise in these Scriptures more often than not unfulfilled? Christians must in all honesty examine this question. Could it be because we have misunderstood or misinterpreted these Scriptures?

In order to optimize our understanding, let us first ask who the author of this epistle was. According to scholars, James was either the younger brother of Jesus, or another man named James who lived much later. Let's say that the author was in fact James, the younger brother of Jesus. Where would James have learned about ministering to the sick? We could assume, not unreasonably, that James learned about healing either directly or indirectly from the teaching and ministry of his older brother Jesus.

If the author was in fact someone names James who lived much later, we can assume that his epistle was based on inspired understanding gleaned from earlier teachings, writings, and Scriptures. Whoever was the author of this epistle, he wrote it to encourage believers to continue in the teaching handed down by Jesus. In light of this, let us then address the question of exactly what was handed down by Jesus to his disciples with regarding to ministry to the infirm.

Exactly what did Jesus teach about ministering to the sick?

Upon close examination we see that Jesus in fact did not teach them to pray for the sick. Neither did Jesus ever command them to do so. Rather, he taught them *to*

heal the sick by laying hands **over** them and exercising the authority he had given them **over** diseases and demons.

Mark 16:18 "...they will place their hands **on** (or **over**) sick people, and they will get well."

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Jesus himself actually never prayed for the sick since His Father had given him authority over diseases and demons. Upon studying his ministry to the infirm, we see that he exercised this authority by rebuking infirmities and commanding the infirm to be healed. He spoke **over** them with authority. He did not pray for the infirm as we do today.

John 14:12 --- Disciples do what Jesus did

And Jesus taught and trained his disciples to do the works that he did, including preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and making disciples. He sent his disciples out to preach the gospel and to heal the sick as he himself did.

We should now interpret James' teaching about ministering to the infirm in light of what Jesus taught about the subject.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray **over** him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

There is a crucial word in verse 14 which has for the most part escaped the attention of the Church. In that verse we are not told to pray *for*, but rather to pray **over** the sick believer. The preposition "over" which follows the verb "pray" in this verse is ἐπί which is pronounced "epi."

"Pray over him" in the Greek is "Προσευξασθωσαν ἐπί αὐτον".

According to Strong's Greek Lexicon, the preposition ἐπί involves *superimposition* (of time, place, order, etc.); of direction when the object of the preposition is in the accusative case. Then the meaning will be "over, upon, towards," etc. Here the object of the preposition ἐπί is "αὐτον" which is indeed in the accusative case. Thus we have the translation "pray over."

The word ἐπί is almost always found to describe the relative physical position between two objects. It can be translated also as "on" or "upon", as in the phrase to "lay hands *on* or *upon* the sick." This is the phrase which also appears in the

passage from Mark 16:18 above: "...they will place their hands **on** (or **over**) sick people, and they will get well."

What is praying over the sick?

Is it possible that praying over the sick as James taught was exactly what Jesus taught, which was laying hands over the sick? It is not only possible, it is probable. Why should James teach something not consistent with what Jesus taught?

As Luke 9 teaches us, Jesus also gave a measure of authority over disease and demons to his disciples. They were to use or exercise this authority in the same way that he did. And so when we examine the ministry of Peter and Paul in Acts, we often see a similar pattern. They also spoke with authority in Jesus' name when giving commands to the infirm to be healed or set free. They spoke with authority over the infirm. They also laid hands on the infirm on some occasions or made physical contact with them in some way.

When we understand what Jesus taught his disciples, we will understand what James taught about ministering to the sick in his epistle.

James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.

Mountain-moving faith

What kind of faith is it that will make the sick person well? Jesus taught the importance of mountain-moving faith. It was because of lack of mountain-moving faith that the disciples once failed to cast out a demon.

Matthew 17:14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

17 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

20 He replied, "Because you have so little **faith**. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as a mustard seed, **you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move.** Nothing will be impossible for you.

Clearly, the disciples failed to drive out the demon because when they commanded the demon to leave, they did not speak to it with mountain-moving faith. When we learn how to speak and pray **over** the infirm with mountain-moving faith, we will see the promise in James 5 fulfilled much more often.

However, both the one ministering healing as well as the sick believer must have faith. Earlier in Chapter 1, James taught:

James 1:6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Jesus also taught the importance of not doubting when either moving mountains with authority or praying.

Mark 11:23 "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 24 ...Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

The ministry of healing in Acts

When we examine the disciples' ministry to the infirm in Acts, we see a similar pattern. In many of the instances of miraculous healing there, the disciples continued to exercise authority over infirmities by issuing commands. Therefore the authority to heal did not pass away with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The pattern the disciples employed in the gospels was carried over to the period of Acts. (After Pentecost, the gift of healing---different from the authority to heal---was also made available to the Church.)

Not once in the gospels or in Acts do we see a miraculous healing take place solely as a result of prayer to God alone without any action involving the ministering disciple. We are not saying that God cannot answer prayer for healing directly and sovereignly. But we do not see this taking place in the New Testament. Could it be that the primary reason we do not see the infirm healed more often is our ignorance of Scripture in this area?

There is no reason why James should have taught something different and not consistent with the pattern we see in the gospels as well as in Acts. And there is also no good reason why today we should teach something different from what we see in those books. Only if we believe in the doctrine of cessationism (or dispensationalism) should we consider teaching an approach to ministering to the infirm which is not found in the gospels and Acts. But if we do, who or what determines the "new" approach?

An important condition for the believer to be healed

Before infirm believers can be healed, any sins on their part must first be forgiven. This is accomplished by the confessing of sins one to another.

James 5:15 ...If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 *Therefore* confess your sins to each other...

In order to understand better the importance of confessing our sins to one another, it would be helpful to look at what Jesus taught about forgiving one another. Confessing sins to one another opens the way for forgiving one another, and can result in reconciliation between believers which is important to our Father.

Matthew 5:23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that *your brother or sister has something against you*, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. *First go and be reconciled to them*; then come and offer your gift.

This is what we should do if someone has something against us. We confess our sins to one another, and are reconciled to one another. But what if we hold something against someone else?

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, *forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins*.

When we *confess our trespasses to one another* and are reconciled to one another by *forgiving one another*, then God will forgive us, and then we can be healed through the prayer of faith.

James 5:16b and pray *for* one another, that you may be healed.

"Pray *for* one another"?

Why is it "pray for" here, but earlier in verse 14 it is "pray over"? Let's examine this anomaly.

Here, "pray *for* one another" in the Greek is "ευχεσθε υπερ αλληλων". The Greek preposition υπερ (pronounced "huper") can indeed be translated "for" as in to "pray *for* one another". But according to Strong's Greek Lexicon, υπέρ ("huper") means "over" when the object of the preposition is in the genitive case. So what is the case of the object of υπέρ?

"Pray for one another" in the Greek is "ευχεσθε υπερ αλληλων".

The object of υπερ above is ἀλλήλων, and it is in fact in the genitive case. Therefore a valid translation of the phrase is "pray over one another." A reasonable case therefore can be made that in both James 5:14 and 16, James is teaching "praying over the sick," and not "praying for the sick" as is traditionally taught and done.

When the sick are "prayed for" in the traditional manner, the results are at best uncertain. But when they are *prayed over* as Jesus did and taught his disciples, the results can often be miraculous as James wrote.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray *over* him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.

James 5 found in the cursing of the fig tree?

Perhaps James took his teaching about healing from what Jesus taught Peter when queried about the cursing of the fig tree. Let's look once again at this incident.

Mark 11:20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" 22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and *does not doubt in his heart* but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever *you ask for in prayer*, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, *forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins*.

In verse 23 Jesus teaches us mountain-moving faith. With this kind of faith we speak **over** infirmities authoritatively with no doubt in our hearts that they will obey us. This is likely what James meant by "praying **over**." Then in verse 24 Jesus teaches "asking for in prayer." The Greek word for "ask for" is *aiteo*, which can carry the meaning not only of asking, but also of *requiring*. Perhaps this is how James came up with the term "praying over" which includes speaking over with authority. Finally, in verse 25 Jesus teaches about forgiving one another, resulting in God's forgiveness. Similarly, James teaches the confession of sins leading to forgiveness from one another and from God.

It is possible seeing these parallels to conclude that James took his teaching on healing directly from Jesus. We know that Jesus taught *healing the sick*, not simply praying for the sick.

Summary

To summarize, praying over the sick as James taught means laying hands over them and speaking over them with authority and mountain-moving faith. When we have correct understanding of what James taught, we will see many more infirm believers healed than what we see now in the Church.

James 5:14-16 does not teach the operation of a special gift of healing which not every believer or elder has. Instead, James is explaining how any scripturally-qualified elder can minister healing to infirm believers through the exercise of authority.

Spirits which cause Infirmities

Many infirmities are purely physical in nature and without any direct demonic cause. However, according to Scripture some infirmities can be caused by the action of demon spirits.

Luke 13:10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been *crippled by a spirit* for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.

The spirit had crippled her and caused permanent physical change to her back, leaving her with a physical infirmity.

12 But when Jesus saw her, He called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." 13 Then He put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Because she now had a physical infirmity (although caused by a spirit) she needed physical healing. That is why Jesus put his hands on her to heal her. It is not recorded in Scripture that Jesus would lay his hands on people when he drove demons out of them.

Luke 11:14 Jesus was driving out a *demon that was mute*. When *the demon left*, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed.

Demons can cause dumbness. Notice Scripture does not say that Jesus laid his hands on him when he drove out the demon. This man did not need physical healing through the laying on of hands, but rather deliverance from the demon which had been inhibiting the man from speaking. After Jesus drove the demon out, the man could immediately speak.

Mark 9:25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You *deaf and mute spirit*," he said, "I command you, come out of him and *never enter him again*."

Spirits can cause deafness. When ministering to the deaf and dumb, we may on occasion rebuke deaf and dumb spirits. When opening hearing-impaired ears, sternly and forcefully command the deaf ears "to be opened" in Jesus' name. We also see that it is scriptural to command spirits not to come back to enter the person again.

Matthew 12:22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was *blind* and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.

Demons can even cause blindness. The English expression "demon-possessed" is actually not found in the original Greek. The Greek terms are better translated "to have a demon" or "to be demonized." The man simply had a demon (or demons) which made him blind and mute.

Discernment of spirits is not always available when ministering to the infirm. Sometimes we may not know whether or not it is a spirit which is responsible for an infirmity. In such a case, "cover" all the different possibilities when you exercise your authority by commanding any unclean spirits to leave.

The Practice of “Spiritual Warfare”

Did Jesus command us to drive out territorial spirits, powers and principalities?

John 14:15 “If you love me, you will obey what I command.

It is clear that Jesus requires his disciples to obey his commands. Inversely, it follows that we are *not* required to do what he has *not* commanded us to do. What are some examples of his commands to the Church? Among other things, we are commanded to:

- love God (Matthew 22:37)
- love one another (Matthew 22:39)
- love our enemies (Matthew 5:44)
- preach the gospel (Mark 16:15)
- heal the sick (Luke 9:1-2; 10:9)
- make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20)
- take care of the poor and needy (Matthew 25:31-40)
- take Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:24)
- repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38)
- pray (Luke 18:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- praise Him (Hebrew 13:15)
- do good and to share with others (Hebrew 13:16)
- assemble together (Hebrew 10:25)
- live a holy life (Hebrew 12:14)
- forgive others (Luke 17:3-4)

These explicit commands as well as others are generally accepted within the body of Christ and are not controversial. What about actions that we perform which are not specifically commanded by the Lord Jesus or his early apostles? Should we be careful before attempting to perform such actions, especially if they involve the supernatural?

What might happen to us if Jesus doesn’t specifically command us to get out of the boat and walk on water?

Let us take the example of Peter who was seated in a boat on the Sea of Galilee when he saw Jesus walking on the water toward him. Peter was very impressed and wanted to walk on water just like Jesus. He wanted to perform a miracle just as he saw Jesus doing. But before he dared to step out of the boat, he waited for an appropriate command from Jesus.

Matthew 14:28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” 29 “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he

saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

When Jesus commanded Peter to "come," the Lord *authorized* Peter to perform the miracle of walking on water. He was *given the authority* to do it. It was clearly the will of the Lord for Peter to perform the miracle. But what would have happened if Peter had not waited for a specific command from Jesus to come? It is obvious that Peter would have immediately sunk into the water after stepping out of the boat. He would have acted without being given any authority by the Lord to do so. None of us in our right mind would even think about stepping out of a boat on the high seas without first receiving a direct and clear command from the Lord to do so. Such an act would be the height of presumption and foolishness. Would the Lord be obligated to save us from drowning if we had in fact done such a thing?

Even though Jesus commanded him, Peter still sank in the water and put himself in danger

Note that even though Peter did receive the command from Jesus to walk on water, after some initial success he failed because of his little faith. His life was endangered, and he cried out to Jesus to save him from drowning. Of course Jesus heard his cry and saved him from the surging sea. But what might happen if we attempt to perform some supernatural feat *without* any command from the Lord to do so? It would likely be a failure and a waste of time and effort. Not only that, it could be *dangerous*. Peter's life was put in danger. And in this case it is important to note that *it was clearly the Lord's will* for him to perform the miracle.

Therefore the Church should be very careful to know exactly what the Lord commands us to do, especially in the realm of the supernatural. Even if it is in the realm of the natural not involving the miraculous, there can be risk in taking action which the Lord has not authorized us to do. For example, if we attempt to do business which is apart from the Lord's will for us, there could be adverse consequences. How much more dangerous might it be for us if we dare to venture into the realm of the supernatural without a prior command and authorization from the Lord? If we do this presumptuously and find ourselves in difficulty, the Lord is not "obligated" to heed us when we ask Him to save us.

Jesus did not explicitly command us to drive out powers and principalities

Such is the case with directly rebuking and attempting to drive out what are known as powers, principalities, and territorial spirits. (We are *not* referring to intercessory prayer to God here.) The nature of such beings is not clearly understood from New Testament Scripture. In Daniel 10 we are perhaps given a glimpse with the references to the "prince of Persia" and the "prince of Greece." But nowhere in Scripture---whether Old Testament or New Testament---are we clearly commanded to engage such beings, let alone Satan himself, in direct frontal assault.

It is clear from verses like those found in Colossians that "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Chapter 2:9-10). Such verses, however, do not constitute a general and explicit command from the Lord for us to attack powers and authorities in a direct fashion by speaking to them and rebuking them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Even well-known verses from Ephesians cannot be used to support such actions.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.
11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

First of all, these verses speak of a defensive posture, not an offensive one in which we attempt to rebuke and drive out the rulers, authorities, powers and spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. Secondly, the foot soldiers of one army do not directly go after the generals of the enemy army. No, they will attack and kill the foot soldiers of the enemy army---only in that way will the battle be won. In the same way, the main business of the body of Christ on earth with regard to the Great Commission is to heal infirm people, to drive out demons from people, proclaim the kingdom of God to the lost (Luke 9:1-2), and to disciple all nations. Our time and energy should not be focused on fighting beings in the heavenly realms---something we have not been clearly authorized nor commanded to do. Rather we should take care of business on earth where we have been given the authority to "heal the sick, and tell them 'the kingdom of God is near you.'" (Luke 10:9)

Ephesians 1:19 ...That power is like the working of his mighty strength,
20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, (NIV) 21 far above all principality and authority and power and dominion, and every name being named, not only in this world, but also in the coming age. (MKJV)

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...

It is true that in the spirit we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, far above all principality and authority and power and dominion. But our position in Christ does not automatically grant us the blanket freedom to attack principalities whenever we would like. We foot soldiers must rather obey the commands of our commander-in-chief and only attack those targets specified by him. In Scripture Jesus commands us only to attack demons and diseases as we proclaim the

kingdom of God to the lost. The domain given to us by God is on earth, not in the heavenly realms. The latter are the domain of the heavenly host.

We should take care only to attack those enemies whom the Lord has commanded us to attack. The Lord has clearly commanded us to heal the sick and cast out demons as we proclaim the kingdom of God to the lost. But to attack a powerful enemy without a clear and direct command from the Lord to do so can invite danger to ourselves from that provoked enemy. The military analogy is valid. Soldiers in the military only attack targets directly specified by their commander. They do not go about attacking the enemy indiscriminately, anyone or anywhere or anytime they wish. If they do so they are in violation of their orders and can face consequences.

What about the authority to trample on “snakes and scorpions”?

Luke 10:17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” 18 He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

According to the context, Jesus had sent them out to heal the sick and proclaim the kingdom of God to the lost (Luke 10:9). This would have included casting demons out of afflicted people as they preached the gospel. When they returned victoriously from their mission trip, Jesus confirmed to them that he indeed had given them authority to drive demons out of afflicted people, referring to these beings as “snakes and scorpions.” These are demons whose activity, like the activity of non-flighted snakes and scorpions which symbolize them, is on the surface of the earth afflicting human beings. Their domain is not in the heavenly realms, and therefore they likely do not refer to “powers and principalities” whose activity is above. We have authority to overcome all the power of such snakes and scorpions, and they cannot harm us. But perhaps we cannot say the same of “powers and principalities.” If we attempt to engage these beings directly, the outcome could be in doubt---even dangerous for us.

It can be dangerous to try to walk on water if we have not been commanded to do so

Not only is it likely ineffective and a waste of resources to engage heavenly beings in direct combat, it can be dangerous. There are enough testimonies of servants of God who without authorization have gone after what are called powers and principalities in a direct fashion and suffered what could be considered counterattack. Some have suffered from infirmities and even death. They and even their families have gone through unnecessary trials because they have gone “beyond what is written.” They have gone beyond the realm of their authority and

engaged an enemy in a battle the Lord did not command them to fight. This happened to the Israelites in the Old Testament.

Numbers 14:44 Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD's covenant moved from the camp. 45 Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.

Under such circumstances the Lord allowed the Israelites to be defeated by their enemies. He did not save them, even if they had called on His name. Similarly, the Lord is not obligated to save us from retaliation when we engage the enemy in a battle presumptuously, find ourselves in trouble and then call on His name. Even if there is no enemy counterattack, we might still face trials because we have made the mistake of acting in presumption before the Lord. In contrast, however, the Lord *didsave* Peter from drowning in the water because he had in fact commanded him to step out of the boat. But the Lord was not pleased with Peter and afterwards rebuked him for failing to complete the miracle.

How can one know that such "spiritual warfare" is in fact effective?

There is no way to measure the effectiveness of direct spiritual warfare against territorial spirits. There is no way of determining whether results on earth (if there are in fact any) are actually a result of such warfare. However, if we obey the clear commands of the Lord to heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim the kingdom of God, we will see visible results: people are actually healed and saved. Churches grow. The kingdom of God on earth increases.

In 2007 The Elijah Challenge conducted the Basic Training in North India. Servants of God were taught how to heal the sick and cast out demons as Jesus taught and commanded his disciples when he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God. After that Joshua Gowda and Simon Haqq began to conduct monthly Evangelistic Feeding Events in which the gospel was preached, the sick were healed, demons were cast out of people, and the people were fed.

In such a way, 42 churches have been planted and 11,098 people (predominantly Hindus) have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ in mostly unreached villages. This took place between July 2007 and June 2010. Other churches networked with The Elijah Challenge have planted another 118 house churches in various parts of North India. By God's grace there is a great move of the Holy Spirit throughout North India. Feeding Events and Elijah Challenge-trained churches are now being used by God in the area of evangelism and church-planting. "Spiritual warfare" is not a part of this.

Moreover, churches trained by The Elijah Challenge are now the fastest growing churches in North India. This is based on progress reports and testimonies Joshua has received from full-time pastors, workers, and churches networked with The Elijah Challenge. In the days to come, Joshua and Simon desire to bring millions of

souls into the Kingdom of God through the approach the Lord has entrusted to them.

The difference between the two approaches

There is very significant difference between the current approach of spiritual warfare against territorial spirits followed by or in conjunction with preaching the gospel, and what is being done by Joshua and Simon in North India.

The current approach involves first spiritual warfare in an attempt to dislodge territorial spirits. After that the sick are prayed for---*not necessarily healed as Jesus taught and commanded his disciples*. And the gospel is preached. Now there are two unscriptural components in this approach. The first is of course the spiritual warfare. The second, surprisingly, is praying for the sick. Jesus never commanded his disciples to pray for the sick when he sent them out. Rather *he commanded them to **heal** the sick*---which is very different and involves actually performing miraculous healings in real time to confirm the truth of the gospel to the listeners.

The scriptural approach which Joshua and Simon are now using involves preaching the gospel, actually healing the sick as Jesus commanded his disciples in Luke 10:9 to confirm the message to the lost, and then feeding the people. The meal is used to draw the people to the event and for fellowship with the new believers afterwards.

Both approaches, it is claimed, result in people turning to Jesus Christ. But one involves some unscriptural practices while the other closely follows the commands given by Jesus to his disciples.

Choose one

Which approach is preferable? Most obviously, the approach which follows scripture closely is to be preferred. It results in the advance of the kingdom of heaven on earth, and there is no risk of counterattack by vengeful rulers and authorities in the heavenlies which we may have angered in our presumption when waging "spiritual warfare." God is not obligated to protect us from their attacks in such a case.

Luke 10:19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; *nothing will harm you.*

This verse applies when we trample on earthbound "snakes and scorpions" which likely refer to spirits and demons attacking people on earth at ground level. It does not apply when we attempt to trample on powerful beings in the second heavens which we have not been commanded or authorized to do.

Let us now return to the word of God to understand how to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us be faithful to obey Scripture. Let us remember the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation: *Sola scriptura*. This Latin phrase means that **Scripture alone** is authoritative for the faith and practice of the believer. The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The "spiritual warfare" approach to evangelism adds a foreign dimension which is not taught in Scripture. It is not necessary, and could in fact be presumptuous and lead to *unnecessary* risks and suffering for ourselves and our loved ones.

We have ministered in some of the spiritually darkest places on the face of the earth. In Africa, we boldly challenge witchdoctors to a contest of power in the fashion of Elijah with the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel. And we consistently witness miracles and victory after victory over the enemy without having to resort to the practice of "spiritual warfare." *And we are blessed with a side-benefit: we do not suffer from trials due to enemy retaliation and counterattack.* We are convinced that we are shielded from them because we have not gone "beyond what is written" but simply done what the word of God says we should do. We are thankful also to our intercessors who blanket us with prayers to the Lord on our behalf.

If one is concerned about powers, principalities and "territorial spirits," one should pray to God about them. And if it is His will He may send properly-equipped and powerful angels to war against them as happened in the time of Daniel's 21-day fast in Daniel Chapter 10.

We can be *both safe and productive* for the kingdom of God

It would be *safer* and *more productive* for the Church to hold to a more literal and conservative interpretation of Scripture regarding what we are to be engaged in here on earth. Clearly we should obey his explicit commands. And teachings involving actions that are not explicitly commanded by him we should consider very carefully. Not only they may be optional, they may be a waste of our resources and some may even pose an unnecessary risk to our personal safety. Today more and more such peripheral teachings are circulating within the body of Christ.

Have we nothing better to do with our time and energy? Should we not rather "be about our Father's business"---saving the lost as Jesus did?

Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

So what should we do?

This section is added for those for whom the issue of "territorial spirits" is especially relevant.

When the people of a nation do not repent of their sins and do not believe in God and His Son Jesus Christ, by default they may in effect be "worshipping" the territorial spirits in the land. (A spiritual vacuum cannot exist for long---it will be filled by something.) This gives any such spirits the right to remain and to have authority in the land. In effect, it is of the free will of the people to allow the spirits to rule over the land. Where this is the case believers have no authority to drive out them out. God allows people to exercise their own free will and they will of course bear the consequences of it. The way to drive out territorial spirits---if indeed this is possible, for Scripture is not clear about their nature and does not specifically say that we can in fact expel them---is to preach the gospel with power and thus free the people of the land from the bondage of sin and unbelief. In this way, they will repent of their sins and thus no longer empower the territorial spirits if indeed this was the case before. The "powers and principalities" will lose their power and authority over the land.

We can understand this by looking at the 2008 Presidential election in the United States. American voters of their own free will chose Democrat Barack Obama as the one who would hold power and authority for four years. The Republicans and conservatives lost power *by the will of the people* and were forced to step aside. Since Barak Obama was legally elected according to the laws of the United States, the Republicans have *no authority* to tell him to leave office. We can see how it depends on the choice of the people. What is the role of the Church in this? We must preach the gospel with power and convert large numbers of people to Jesus Christ. In upcoming elections these believers will vote for the candidate who shares their values. In this way there can be a change of administration and direction. However, this wonderful scenario involving the Church will likely not take place. Therefore intercessory prayer (and "spiritual warfare") all by itself is insufficient. We must put feet to our prayers and obey Christ's command to proclaim the kingdom of God with power to the lost and to disciple our nation. Only then "the kingdom will come" in America. The same is true for every nation under heaven. Whether or not the Church will actually do this is moot.

Why has this come about?

Perhaps we have become so involved with "optional" teachings because as committed and sincere disciples of Christ we truly want to advance His Kingdom on earth. But since we have not been taught how to obey the frontline commands of the Lord to win the lost, we busy ourselves with secondary concerns. At best they serve to distract us from doing what it takes to complete the Great Commission. At worst, they may be hazardous to our well-being.

The Church has it backwards

Traditionally, we pray to God and ask Him to heal the sick on earth, while we directly come against and rebuke principalities and “territorial spirits” in the heavens. Does the Church have it backwards?

Instead of only praying for the sick, we should also be commanding them to be healed in Jesus’ name. Instead of directly commanding powers and principalities to leave, we should rather pray and ask God to deal with them if we are burdened about them. Perhaps God will send angels to deal with them as He did in Daniel 10. In the incident recorded in that chapter, Daniel was not at all engaged in direct “spiritual warfare” against the prince of the Persian kingdom. He was simply fasting (and presumably praying) before the Lord.

Why do Infirmities Sometimes Return?

We have seen in practice that infirmities can return after they have been driven out and the person is healed. Is there a scriptural basis for this?
What should be done if an infirmity returns?

Luke 11:24 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, '*I will return* to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there." And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

Demons may attempt to return

We understand from Jesus' teaching in Luke 11 that an expelled demon will attempt to return to its former house. Therefore when we minister deliverance to people who are engaged in witchcraft or idol-worship, we must inform them that the demonic affliction will almost certainly return if they do not repent and turn to Jesus. If they do not repent and the infirmity returns with even greater severity, we are not responsible.

However, even if they do repent, it is possible that the demon will still try to return. Luke 11 teaches that this is the disposition of the demon. What should be done when the person feels the affliction returning?

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. *Resist the devil*, and he will flee from you.

The first step of course is to submit to God which will involve repentance. Only then do we have the authority to resist the devil. James says that under such conditions the demon must flee.

Demons and disease and our flesh have something in common

Demons and disease (in the context of the proclamation of the gospel) and the works of our flesh are all under our authority. And they have something in common. Like demons, the works of the flesh may attempt to return after we have made Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Even though our sinful nature has been put to death on the cross when we repent and put our faith in Jesus, it can still tempt us to sin. If and when it does, we have the authority to resist it and rebuke it forcefully.

Matthew 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, *gouge it out* and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than

for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, *cut it off* and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Does this mean that we are to mutilate our bodies in an attempt to resist sin? No, gouging out our eye or cutting off our hand does not affect our sinful nature. Rather, we put to death the misdeeds of our body by the Spirit, as we have seen in an earlier chapter. We put our sinful nature to death by exercising the authority that we have over it by the power of the Spirit. We rebuke it. We treat it harshly as we would a servant. As the apostle Paul taught, we “beat our body and make it our slave.”

The physical infirmity may also attempt to return

Demons and the deeds of the flesh and physical infirmities all behave in similar ways. Physical infirmities can also attempt to return after having been driven out in the name of Jesus Christ. And just as we rebuke demons and the deeds of our flesh should they attempt to return, we also rebuke and resist the infirmity if it returns. If we persevere in resisting whenever it attempts to return, the healing should be permanent.

Repentance from unhealthy lifestyle habits after being healed

After the Lord heals us, we must turn away from unhealthy habits such as overeating or eating unhealthy foods. If we do not repent, the infirmity will almost certainly return.

A believer can and should optimize his physical health by having a healthy lifestyle. He should be a good steward of the “temple” entrusted to him by the Lord.

Keeping the Right Balance

This most important section completes the Training. It has to do with practical righteousness, godliness and holiness in the everyday life of the servant of God. These things are possible in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 12:14 "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord."

Do not become a "false prophet"

Matthew 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are *ferocious* wolves.

Jesus warns us to watch out for false prophets. The Greek word translated "ferocious" in Matthew 7:15 literally means "rapacious" or "ravenous" as when describing an extortionist or a robber. Wolves prey on sheep to satisfy their excessive covetousness

Matthew 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are *ferocious* wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. ...19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven.

We need to know what is the fruit by which we can recognize a false prophet. Can we tell by the outward effectiveness of the servant of God?

22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Miraculous signs and manifestations of power and gifts in the ministry of the prophet, therefore, do not automatically certify him or her as a true servant of God. So how can we recognize these false prophets---these wolves in sheep's clothing?

False prophets and greed

1 Timothy 6:3 If anyone teaches *false doctrines* and does not agree to the *sound instruction* of our Lord Jesus Christ and to *godly teaching*, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of

corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth *and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

There are so-called "servants of God" whose ministries have become a means of making a very good living. They draw very large salaries, live in expensive homes, and drive high-end luxury automobiles. Some are household names and fly their own airplanes. They see this celebrity lifestyle as God's reward and blessing for them, but they have been deceived by the love of money and the American Dream.

Some are driven by personal ambition. They want the biggest church or the biggest meetings. To draw the huge crowds, they preach messages that people want to hear. They tickle people's ears with promises of God's various blessings for them on earth. But they fail to emphasize the far weightier teachings regarding repentance, godliness, righteous works, and the Great Commission. The primary emphasis in the word of God is not what God can do for us here on earth, but how we can please the Lord here on earth for the sake of eternal life. Unfortunately, such messages do not sell and draw eager crowds bringing their offerings. Indeed, such ministers of the gospel have found a successful business model. They have learned the secret of success from their counterparts in the business world all too well.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.
7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, *we will be content with that.* 9 *People who want to get rich* fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 *For the love of money* is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But you, man of God, *flee from all this,* and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

The Church in America has spawned a generation of prosperity teachers who assure us that "God wants you rich now." And if you want to fulfill God's desire for you to be rich, you must plant your seed offerings for "the work of the gospel"---preferably in their ministry. Unfortunately, these false prophets have exported their teaching to the rest of the world---especially to poor countries in Africa where people are desperate and so embrace their deception wholeheartedly.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also *false prophets* among the people, just as there will be *false teachers* among you...
2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 *In their greed* these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up... 14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; *they are experts in greed*—an

accursed brood! 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, *who loved the wages of wickedness*.

(Jude 11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed *for profit* into Balaam's error...)

2 Peter 2:17 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, *by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature*, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

False doctrines

2 Timothy 2:15 *Do your best* to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who *correctly handles the word of truth*.

To be safe, it is best to be cautious and to exercise discernment regarding practices or supernatural manifestations that are not strongly supported by the New Testament. Before we accept them or teach them, they should generally have precedents as having been seen or practiced in Scripture on various occasions---not just once in some isolated incident.

For example, the New Testament is mostly silent about the role of angels in miraculous healing. Thus we should be careful not to deliberately involve them in healing the infirm, even if doing so results in miracles. Not all miracles are from God.

2 Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

So how do you recognize a true prophet or teacher?

The outward evidence of a true servant of God is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 But *the fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control...

The outward evidence of our salvation is not power and authority to heal the sick, cast out demons, and do miracles, but rather the fruit of the Holy Spirit---holiness and godly character by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Why did Cain fall?

Genesis 4:2 ...Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; *it desires to have you, but you must master it.*"

Many servants of God have failed to master sin, but instead have fallen under its control.

Rejoice not in the authority you have been given

Luke 10:17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 20 "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but *rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*"

Do not become overly enamored with the authority over disease and demons. It is only given to us temporarily for use on earth to fulfill the Great Commission. Rather, rejoice that you have eternal life in Christ.

“Final Examination”

This exam consists of three multiple-choice questions. Correctly answering these questions requires careful thought. The first answer that comes to mind will likely be the wrong answer.

First Question

Both faith *in* God and faith *of* God are important, and each has its role in our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. But let us take a hypothetical situation in which we must choose to have only one of the two for the rest of our lives on earth. Which would you choose: faith *in* God, or faith *of* God?

Second Question

There is a time for prayer to God, and a time to command demons and diseases. But if you are forced to choose one of the two for the rest of your life on earth as a follower of Jesus Christ, which would you choose: prayer to God, or rebuking diseases and demons?

Third Question

Both the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit have important roles in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Obviously we want to have both of them. But let us take a hypothetical situation in which we are forced to choose between the two. Which one would you choose: the power of the Holy Spirit, or the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

The correct answers to these three questions are found on the next page.

Answers to Examination Questions

First Question

Faith *in* God is foundational and is more important. It is faith *in* God through Jesus Christ which saves us, which transforms us to be like Him. Although faith *of* God can enable us to do the works that He did, it is in the end more important to be *like Him* in His character and holiness than *to do the works that He did*. The outward evidence of our salvation is holiness in our daily walk as Christ lives through us and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. By contrast, even false prophets can heal the sick and cast out demons by exercising faith *of* God.

Second Question

Prayer to God is more important than commanding diseases and diseases. Would you rather spend your time talking to and fellowshiping with the Lord or talking to and warring against demons and diseases? (But in the life of a believer on earth, there is a time for each activity.)

Third Question

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is more important to us who want eternal life. It is the outward evidence that we are saved. While the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to ministry, it can also be a means for deceived ministers of the gospel to accumulate earthly wealth and possessions.

Finally, the Great Commission

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Reaching the Unreachable

- **Christianity or Jesus Christ?**
- **The Kingdom of God comes not from without, but from within**

Christianity or Jesus Christ?

Christianity today is under attack on different fronts. In America and the West the mainstream media, academia, and the popular culture do not take Christianity seriously as presenting Truth, but only as one of various man-made religions. In countries where Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism are the predominant religions, the adherents of Christianity are subject to intimidation, persecution, and in some places to violence and bloodshed. When the latter takes place, the whole Body grieves and suffers.

Can the blame for this be completely laid at the doorstep of the enemies of Christianity? Is it solely the result of the influence of atheism, secular humanism, the work of false religions? I believe the answer is no, not quite. It is possible that to some extent certain aspects of Christianity itself can be identified as contributing factors.

In America and the West, Christianity may have presented to the world an image which is more negative than positive. Scandal after scandal and moral failure after moral failure involving Christian ministers (and the resultant "spin") reinforce the impression that Christianity is a religion rife with sanctimonious hypocrites. The world watches prosperity preachers on Christian TV selling the modern equivalent of snake oil and they smirk, shaking their heads knowingly. Unfortunately, many Christians lack discernment and are gullible enough to give their money to these false shepherds.

On the foreign mission field, the impression given by Christianity to the adherents of pagan religions has also been lacking. In some of these Third World countries Christianity is known as the competing religion of the imperialists from the West who subjugated them by force and whose colonial empires lasted well into the last century---within the memory of people still alive today. Christian foreign missionaries who simply by association were linked to these foreign occupiers came and planted churches under the flag of western Christianity. Sadly, while there are some outstanding exceptions the majority of these churches---especially in India---did not continue to impart life but became nominal in their faith. Many Christians today in these countries are carnal and powerless. In their personal lives they are poor witnesses of Jesus Christ to the pagans around them. In addition, the problems that infect Christianity in America have no doubt to some degree been imported to Christianity in the Third World as well. To make matters worse, America is seen by outsiders as a Christian country. The lifestyle of sin which is almost encouraged by popular American culture has thus become inextricably linked to Christianity.

This is the Christianity that is known to billions of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists around the world. Those in their midst who convert to Christianity are seen by them as betraying their own ancestral beliefs and, equally importantly, their own culture and conservative traditions. We can see from this perspective why Christianity and Christians are encountering such opposition today. The problem is not simply that

darkness cannot stand light. Added to that is the image and poor witness that Christianity and Christians have presented to the world, their good works notwithstanding.

To a disciple of Jesus Christ whose background is western, the terms Christianity and Christian are hallowed. But the world's understanding of these terms, as we are beginning to see, can be shockingly different. How can we overcome this?

We can start with the observation that the term "Christianity" is not found at all in the New Testament. The term "Christian" is found only twice, and on neither occasion was it uttered by Christ Himself; it did not originate with Him. In Acts 26:28, years after Christ ascended to heaven, it was used by a pagan king named Agrippa as he spoke to the apostle Paul. In 1 Peter 4:16 it was mentioned by Peter to encourage believers in their sufferings for the gospel. But it is likely that the understanding of the word "Christian" to Peter two thousand years ago is far different from what the world thinks of the term today. We also observe that in Scripture Jesus never taught his disciples to identify themselves as "Christians." This particular term was first used to refer to believers in Antioch after Paul and Barnabas brought the gospel there (Acts 11:26). Tradition says that it was a pejorative term coined by non-believers.

There is moreover confusion regarding the term "church." In the New Testament it refers to the body of believers who profess Jesus Christ, whether in a local sense or universal sense. But today the world understands "church" as a physical structure where Christians go and assemble to practice their religion. Did Jesus Christ ever command his disciples to "go to church?" No, he did not. Rather he commands us to repent of our sins, to be baptized, and to follow and to obey Him. While it may be important for Christians in America and the West to "go to church" every Wednesday and Sunday, it is certainly not a scriptural requirement for entrance into the kingdom of God. One can worship the Lord, find fellowship and be discipled in any number of locations or contexts not known as "church." This is especially important to understand in countries where the strongholds of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism prevail and bring about persecution to the adherents of Christianity.

In contrast to the negativity that "Christianity" and "Christian" can evoke around the world, the historical figure of Jesus Christ is generally held in high regard. Muslims, as an example, regard him as a great prophet who will someday return. Generally, he is considered a great teacher, and his name is typically mentioned in the same breath as Confucius or Buddha. While adherents of pagan religions do not accept him as God Incarnate and the only way to the Father, they do not *consciously* despise him as they might despise the religion of "Christianity" and those identified as "Christians." We should learn to take advantage of this understanding for more effective evangelism.

Christ has commanded us to fulfill the Great Commission to the lost. In this we want to avoid setting up *unnecessary* obstacles to the gospel as well as to avoid *unnecessary* persecution from Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. For this purpose we should distinguish sharply between *Jesus Christ* on the one hand

and *Christianity* on the other. We should not mention conversion to Christianity, but simply preach Jesus Christ. In some contexts it may be wise even not to identify ourselves with what the world understands as "Christians." Rather, we simply call ourselves *believers*; we are *disciples of Jesus Christ*; we are *followers of the Way*. In doing this we are certainly not denying the person of Jesus Christ but rather distancing ourselves from the western religion the world calls Christianity. We no longer preach at the earthbound level of competing religions, instead we stay above the fray by preaching only the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Way to the Father. The unsurpassed miracles that accompany our preaching demonstrate to the lost that He is in fact the Life and the Truth.

After sinners in America repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ, they are typically told to go to church for worship, fellowship, and discipleship. But times are changing. America is no longer a "Christian" country. Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have immigrated to America by the millions and built thousands of mosques and temples in our land. Swaths of America are now mission fields populated by foreign-born as well as American-born adherents of these pagan religions. Should we not in these pagan enclaves apply methods which are effective on the foreign mission field?

When such people in America come to Christ as Lord and Savior, we should consider bringing them together for worship, fellowship, and discipleship in physical locations which are *not* identified as "churches" or as "Christian." Scripturally, these new believers need not even call themselves "Christians." Rather they maintain their identity as members of their community and they keep their culture *but now as those who follow Christ*. In this way they can more readily remain in their community to witness for Jesus Christ. And it is vital that they be taught to live as personal witnesses of His holiness in their daily lives and to minister as witnesses of His supernatural power to heal and deliver.

When ministering to people from a pagan background in America, it is important to distinguish between *western cultural Christianity* on the one hand and *the Way taught by Jesus Christ* on the other. When we disciple them according to Scripture and not according to the traditions of western Christianity, they will not become "Christians" as understood by their community; they will not become adherents of the religion known to their community as "Christianity." Since we are not presenting to them a religion that competes with the religion of their community, we will not insist at the outset that they renounce their religion and convert to Christianity. Converting to Christ is not the same as converting to religion of Christianity. Instead, we will sidestep the very sensitive issue of religion---and thus culture as well---and simply disciple them according to the Bible as followers of the Christ who has saved them. As they are taught the word of God, the Holy Spirit will convict them. They will on their own eventually give up beliefs and practices both spiritual and cultural which are contrary to Scripture. The kingdom of God will come from within, not imposed as a foreign religion from without.

The Kingdom of God comes not from without, but from within

In the modern era the West planted foreign flags and concepts in the Third World through military force. Democracy, for example, has come to be the outward form of government in many former colonies. The democratic form of government was imported to them from without.

Often on the heels of the western military would come missionaries to plant the flag of western Christianity on the foreign soil. Unfortunately, however, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not about outward forms to be "imported" from without. The gospel is rather a seed to be planted *within* any number of types of soil---cultures---found on our planet. The seed is: Jesus Christ the Son of God suffered on the cross to bear our sins and then rose from the dead. Those who repent of their sins and follow Him as His disciples receive eternal life. This is the seed of the gospel which is to be planted wherever the kingdom of God is proclaimed.

An orange seed will result in an orange tree whose external form will depend in part on local environmental factors and the nature of the soil in which the seed was planted. In the same way the seed of the gospel will grow and take on a certain external form unique to the culture of the people group where the gospel has been planted. In this way the Kingdom of God should take on different outward forms in different places in the world, although there is but one Lord and Savior.

Unfortunately however, western missionaries have in general not simply planted the seed of the gospel in foreign cultures. Figuratively speaking they have instead attempted to take a plant or tree from the western culture where it was planted and grew and tried to *transplant* it to a foreign culture. This is why in some Third World churches we can see western forms and ways of doing things. We may see African and Asian preachers dressed neatly in western-style dark suits and ties on Sunday morning. Some of their church buildings have neatly arranged wooden pews inside and are embellished outside with steeples and bells which may contrast starkly with the surrounding native architecture. During Sunday meetings the songs, order of worship, and even the sermons bear an eerie but not surprising resemblance to their western counterparts. Third World churches are also program-oriented like most churches in the west. The kingdom of God has been brought to these non-western cultures from without.

What is the problem with this?

The problem is that the outward form of the gospel in that non-western culture has taken on a distinctively western look. To the people there, it has taken on many of the characteristics of a *religion*. Take "the religion of peace" as an example. Outward *form* for this religion is very important. It prescribes a dress code for its adherents, a specific language for worship and prayer (Arabic), an onion dome and loudspeakers atop its places of worship, a holy city called Mecca which pilgrims must visit. It ideally prescribes a return to the ways and forms of the seventh century when its founder lived. The same is true to some extent of Hinduism and

Buddhism. Unfortunately, because of the importance placed on outward forms by Christian missionaries and their followers, the people of the land view the Way as another religion---*one that competes with theirs*.

Perhaps even more disconcerting is the fact that *most followers of Christ* have come to have nearly the same point of view. To them outward forms and labels are not only important, but have come to take on the ring of absolute truth. They have come to believe that those who do not subscribe to the same outward forms and labels cannot be saved. For example, they may believe that for Muslim to be saved, he must formally renounce his religion and publicly convert to what is known as Christianity along with its accompanying customs. To most native people, unfortunately, Christianity means the competing foreign religion imported by former colonial masters. To them Christianity is the religion that spawned, among other things, Hollywood and the filth that it often exports.

Followers of Jesus may also believe that for an Muslim to be saved, he must become what is known as a Christian. The reality, unfortunately, is that many so-called Christians are not saved and have a poor witness for Christ. Moreover, Christ Himself never commanded his disciples to be known as Christians. Christians also believe that the new convert must join the body of Christ by "going to church." But as the saying goes, "going to church" does not make someone a disciple of Christ anymore than walking into a garage makes someone an automobile. In a more serious vein, does the body of Christ gather for fellowship only in church buildings? Must a follower of Christ be disciplined and taught only in a church facility, and nowhere else? It would seem that sincere followers of Jesus Christ have unwittingly turned the Way---to outsiders---into just another religion that competes with their indigenous religions.

Therefore we see one reason why the followers of Jesus Christ have failed to complete the Great Commission *even two thousand years* after the mandate was given to them. They have unknowingly made it unnecessarily difficult for the adherents of the religion of peace, and those of Hinduism and Buddhist to enter the Kingdom of God by importing it from without. They mistakenly put undue emphasis on the outward. Jesus by contrast said that we would be worshipping the Father neither on a mountain in Samaria nor in Jerusalem, but rather *in spirit and in truth* (John 4:21-24). A second reason for the failure of the Church to fulfill the Great Commission is her lack of supernatural power to demonstrate to the lost that the kingdom of God is near.

We have seen that importing outward forms from one culture into another does not work well. Even in so-called democratic countries in the Third World, democracy falls far short of its apparent success in the West where it originated. Observe for example the rampant corruption and authoritarian practices that we observe in so-called democracies in the Third World, especially those which have but a single political party.

Unlike the West, "the religion of peace" does not have the military power to force itself upon other peoples. They have decided to try what in fact may be more

effective: they are planning to conquer peacefully *from within*. History tells us that Rome conquered the barbarians militarily, but as the barbarians immigrated to Rome in later generations they conquered her culturally without drawing the sword. In 1848 the United States defeated Mexico in the Mexican-American War after annexing Texas as a state in 1845. But now there are so many Latino immigrants both legal and illegal in Texas and other states that restaurants are known to put up humorous signs which do not say *Se habla español* ("Spanish spoken here"), but rather *English spoken here*. The "conquest" is taking place peacefully from within.

In the same way, "the religion of peace" hopes to conquer Western Europe---not from without by force, but peacefully from within. In the United Kingdom, for example, Muslims are now perhaps twenty percent of the population. Because of continued immigration and high birthrates, the Muslims could be in the majority in the United Kingdom by the year 2020 according to one estimate. When they are in the majority they will have the political power to enact shariah law in some areas. Even the revered Archbishop of Canterbury startled many recently by stating that shariah law is all but inevitable in the United Kingdom.

What can we learn from this? We can come to understand that the Kingdom of God is a seed to be planted peacefully within an indigenous culture. It is not a religion with its outward forms and labels to be transplanted from a western culture and forced upon a non-western culture. Only when it is planted *from within as a seed* can it flourish.

Mark 4:26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

Luke 13:20 Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

Luke 17:20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

The Pharisees were experts in outward forms and legalistic religion. But according to Jesus, the Kingdom of God is not about the outward and the visible, but is within us.

Therefore when the gospel is brought to a people group who live within a certain culture or subculture---they could even live in East London---it should be planted as a seed. In some cases we should not force upon them "Christian *customs*," no matter how time-honored they are to us, in order for them to be saved. The kingdom of God should come from within as the outworking of the growing seed, not imported or forced from without.

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the *custom* taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

A council was convened in Jerusalem to discuss this matter. Finally the apostles and elders came to a decision.

Acts 15:11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

It is not by following Christian customs---as revered as they may be---that Muslims come into the kingdom of God. It is not necessarily by "converting to Christianity" or by "becoming a Christian." It is not necessary for them to "join a church" after they are saved. In some cases it may be far better for them to seek fellowship and discipleship in a venue *not* known as a church or associated with a church. Instead, we should encourage *an entirely indigenous movement* of followers of Isa Almasih, the outward form of which is determined by cultural and local factors. In public, this movement should be separated and distanced from Western Christianity.

When Muslims are introduced to Isa Almasih through a supernatural event such as a miraculous healing, dream, or vision, they are drawn to Him. He is already their prophet mentioned in the Quran. Is it not possible that through many such undeniable miracles taking place in a community or mosque, the Muslims there gradually decide to follow Him and are discipled according to the Scriptures? Can Jesus Christ be worshipped in a mosque? Can this possibly happen to many Muslims and in many mosques to result in a mass movement of Muslim followers of Jesus Christ?

In the estimation of this author who spent nearly nine years as a missionary in Indonesia and has spent time ministering in other Muslim nations, that scenario is far more likely than a mass movement of Muslims renouncing their religion and then converting to the western religion despised and known to their community as Christianity. Doing this would require them to betray their culture and their families as well. The certain persecution which swiftly befalls those few who dare take this public step makes a mass movement of Muslims to Christianity extremely unlikely if not outright impossible. Only those who have lived in such a culture can understand this.

According to Scripture, is this kind of persecution really necessary in order to enter the kingdom of God?

Matthew 10:32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

Jesus is not referring here to disowning Christianity or disavowing being a Christian. The verse is referring instead to disowning the person of Jesus Christ. The Muslim followers of Jesus Christ do not disown him. They in fact acknowledge that they are disciples of Isa. We have already seen that following Jesus Christ is certainly not equivalent to the terms the world understands as *Christianity* and *Christian*. Following Jesus as taught by Scripture is not necessarily synonymous with converting to Christianity. When former British Prime Minister Tony Blair "converted" from Protestantism to Catholicism, did that mean he disowned Jesus (if in fact Jesus was ever His Lord and Savior)? No, of course it did not mean that. Mr. Blair was simply changing outward religions. And changing outward religions is *not* the primary focus here. We want to rise *above* the level of competing religions. We want to see change first and foremost from *within* that does not necessarily require a corresponding change in outward religion. For sure there will be definite outward change accompanying the inward one, but not necessarily involving converting to another religion.

The world and its religions have serious objections with what is known as Christianity and many of its adherents. But the same cannot be said regarding how they view Jesus Christ. In fact, He is generally honored as a great prophet and teacher. Should we not take advantage of this and put some distance between Him and the religion that was---perhaps unfortunately---named after Him?

So let the Church of Jesus Christ learn a lesson from the Scriptures and even from history. The kingdom of God should not come from without in pre-determined form, but *naturally from within as a seed*. Before the Muslims take over a western country from within via immigration and a high birthrate, let us plant the pure seed of the gospel within them to give birth to an entirely indigenous movement of Muslim followers of Christ. The Lord has already given us the tool: the power and authority to heal infirm Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists consistently when we proclaim the kingdom of God to them. With that supernatural power and authority let us now plant the seed and watch it grow "all by itself" to become a tree that gives life (Mark 4:26-29).

The same principle of contextualization might apply to some extent in preaching the kingdom of God to Buddhists and Hindus as well. At the same time of course we must take care not to fall into the snare of syncretism as has happened in the past. It is possible that the Protestant Church has reacted to syncretism by going to the very opposite extreme. The consequence of this may have been to limit the effectiveness of our witness to the world.

Some Notable Earlier Events

- Healing Outreaches for Nameless Believers
 - Niger, West Africa
 - Egypt 2002
 - Vietnam 2003
 - Uganda and Benin
- Benin Revisited 2007

Healing Outreaches for Nameless Believers

Hong Kong City Mall in Houston, Texas

God is restoring His power to His people to complete the Great Commission---proclaiming the gospel to the world and discipling all nations. Where do we find "the world?" We know that we do not find the world in our churches which are for the most part sanctuaries for those who profess Christ. Unbelievers are found outside the walls of our churches---in their homes, in the marketplace, and in public places.

It is pleasing to the Lord when we dare to take the gospel outside the church, and to proclaim it boldly in the spirit of Elijah. It was Elijah who dared to proclaim atop Mt. Carmel that the Lord is the true God *and that he would prove it*. The fire that descended from heaven in full view of everyone in response to Elijah's challenge and prayer was the evidence that Elijah's God was the true God.

The New Testament equivalent of what Elijah did is to preach the gospel to the lost and to demonstrate in a public fashion that Jesus is the only way to the Father by performing signs and wonders in His name for everyone to see.

One way to do this is by holding a "healing outreach" in a public place, for example, in a shopping mall. This is actually being done in Houston's Chinatown district. There is a large shopping mall called Hong Kong City Mall patronized by the Asian community of Houston---mostly Chinese and Vietnamese. Most of these are Buddhists. In the beginning, we set up a table with Christian literature underneath a sign which said "FREE HEALING PRAYER" in Vietnamese, Chinese, and English. Our purpose was to draw Buddhists and unbelievers to us to hear the gospel.

People with infirmities, both Christians and unbelievers, saw our sign and requested prayer for healing. Between eighty and ninety percent of those ministered to immediately experienced God's healing touch and testified that they felt better or were healed. If they were unbelievers, we would seize the opportunity, like Peter at the temple gate in Acts 3, to share the gospel of Christ with these precious souls. In this manner, many Buddhists and unbelievers have come to know Christ as Lord and Savior. The Vietnamese Baptist Church, which has now been trained to take over the outreach, follows up these new believers.

For two months, Siu Wang had rheumatic fever along with pain in her joints---especially her ankle and back---and could not sleep at night. Her doctors did not understand what kind of arthritis she had, and the medication they prescribed for her did not help at all. One Sunday she and her husband traveled to Houston from Austin for her weekly acupuncture treatment at the Hong Kong City Mall. After the session she was still in pain. She happened to pass by our table in front of the Hong Kong Food Market and saw our sign which said, "Free Healing Prayer."

My wife approached Siu as she browsed over the literature on the table, asking if we had any tracts on healing. We didn't have any, but Lucille offered to pray over

her. We had her sit down. She told us about the pain in her ankle and back. I laid my hand on her ankle and rebuked the pain, after which she got up and tested her ankle. The pain had subsided, she said. Lucille quickly shared the gospel with her and asked if she wanted to receive Christ. She replied that her friends had also shared Christ with her, but that she wanted to read the tracts first. Then she shared about her back pain, and Lucille laid her hand on her back with authority in the name of Jesus Christ. Her back pain was much less, and she was very happy feeling so much relief. She left to rejoin her husband who was still shopping inside the Hong Kong Food Market.

When her husband saw her walking toward him without pain, he asked, "What happened to you? You have no difficulty walking!"

"Yes, a pastor prayed over me, and that's why I feel so good now!" she replied. They returned home to Austin that afternoon.

Siu was well---no more pain in her body, the fever was gone, and she could sleep at night. She called her Christian friends and shared with them about the pastor in Houston who had ministered to her and how she was healed. She and her husband wanted to believe in Jesus Christ, but she regretted that she didn't accept the Lord on the Sunday that she was healed. She didn't know how to contact us. On one of the tracts she had taken from our table she found the name and number of a Chinese pastor in Houston. She called him and recounted to him what had happened to her. He knew us and gave her our telephone number, and she called us Thursday night. Over the telephone with my wife, she and her husband accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Later Siu Wang, completely healed, was baptized in water along with her husband. They joined a large evangelical Chinese church in Austin.

Possible tumor disappears in Mall Outreach

Mrs. Diep Huynh anxiously surveyed her bloated tummy which throbbed with pain. She had watched herself gradually swell from a size eight to a size sixteen. Finally she went to see a doctor. The physician at the Hong Kong City Mall in Houston told her she needed a colonoscopy for an accurate diagnosis, but his initial written diagnosis was a tumor that had made her tummy as hard as a rock. Mrs. Huynh, an immigrant from Vietnam who did not speak English, did not have insurance or the money for this expensive treatment. She left the doctor's office in bewilderment, looking for someone in the Mall, anyone who could comfort her fears and tell her what to do.

She approached our table in the Mall area, drawn by a sign which read "Free Healing Prayer" in Vietnamese.

My teammate Jordan Diep and I laid hands on her and ministered to her in the name of Jesus. She literally felt something happening---something moving around--in her stomach. And there was the definite sensation of liquid leaking out and wetting her pants. Instinctively she reached down to touch her pants, but they were

dry. At that time she felt her pants beginning to fall off, and she quickly grabbed hold of them to keep herself from certain embarrassment. Her tummy had shrank back to its original size; if there had been a tumor, it had vanished. The pain in her tummy was gone. She had been completely and instantly healed in the name of Jesus Christ. In gratitude, Mrs. Huynh accepted Christ as her Lord and Savior, and began attending the Vietnamese Baptist Church. Her family was still in Vietnam, and they were idol-worshippers. But Mrs. Huynh sent them sermon notes from her Pastor along with pages torn out from a Vietnamese Bible. Through her ministry, her family in Vietnam accepted Christ and began to reach out to others.

Later Mrs. Huynh had an opportunity to return to her home village in Vietnam. The church there had been struggling along with about thirty people. But as she shared about what Jesus had done for her, God began to move in her village. Hundreds of people came to Christ as a result, and the church laid plans to construct a new building. On this trip the Lord began to use Mrs. Huyuh to heal the sick, even in ministering mass healing to crowds in the powerful name of Jesus.

At the same time the Lord was moving powerfully through Pastor Khanh Huynh and Jordan Diep at the Vietnamese Baptist Church. After Pastor Khanh invited me to hold the Elijah Challenge Training for his congregation, God began to heal the sick miraculously through the ministry of the church. Every Sunday unbelievers would line up in the church to receive their healing in the name of Jesus Christ. These people, mostly Buddhists, began to witness to other unbelievers about the Jesus who heals. And precious souls were saved as God manifested the visible proof that Jesus is His Son and has authority to forgive sins. That proof consists of the miraculous healings (cf. Mark 2:1-12).

The Outreach continues to bear fruit as miraculous healings take place in the busy Hong Kong City Mall under Pastor Khanh Huynh and the Vietnamese Baptist Church. It was reported in 2008 that one hundred souls accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior there every Saturday.

Niger, West Africa 2002

Niger is a French-speaking country located north of Nigeria in West Africa. Not to be confused with Nigeria which has an oil industry and some of the largest churches in the world, Niger is impoverished. According to the UN it usually ranks as one of the three poorest countries in the entire world. In 2002 the population of Niger was over 99% Muslim and the number of born-again believers by one estimate was one-twentieth of one percent of the population. Most of the churches in Niger were very small and evangelical in doctrinal stance. To make matters even worse, there was no fellowship or unity between pastors and churches. Like in many places around the world, they eyed one another with mutual suspicion as rivals and competitors. The situation for the gospel in Niger was so bad that the Muslim government placed no official restrictions on the preaching of the gospel.

In November 2002 I went to Niger at the invitation of World Horizons and World Vision to conduct Training and a Crusade for the churches in the capital city, Niamey. For the first time of the history of the Church in Niger, churches and pastors came together. The purpose was to learn how to win the Muslims for Christ by demonstrating to them the power of the name of Jesus to heal the sick. As in most of the world outside the West, it is common knowledge that the most effective way of winning souls to Christ is through the tool of miraculous healings in His name.

First we held the Basic Training to train the local pastors and leaders how to heal the sick in the name of Jesus according to the Scriptures. Both evangelicals and charismatics came together for the very first time. After completing several days of training, we held the very first open-air evangelistic Crusade in the history of Niger.

Muslims and Christians came bringing infirm people of all kinds to the seven consecutive evening meetings. Never before had there been such an event. Each night I proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Muslims who came. I told them, "since both Muslims and Christians worship the God of Abraham, all of us here actually worship the same God." (Actually I do not believe that we worship the same God as the Muslims. But historically it is true, and that fact can be used to build a bridge to the Muslims.) Continuing, I would say, "However, we do not agree as to the correct way to reach the God of Abraham. I believe that it is only through Isa Almasih [Jesus Christ in Arabic] that we can reach Him. However, you may believe that there is some other way, perhaps through the Koran or the Five Pillars of Islam. But which is the correct way?"

I told them, "Why don't we ask the God of Abraham Himself to show us tonight which is the correct way?" In this way there would be no need to debate or argue. Let the true God speak for Himself.

"Here's what we will do. There are all kinds of infirm people here. Let us ask the God of Abraham to heal them. Only the God of Abraham, the true God who created the heavens and the earth, can open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf.

And when we pray to the God of Abraham to ask Him to heal the infirm, we will pray in the name of Isa Almasih [Jesus Christ].

If the miracles then happen and people come up to testify of their healings, what should we conclude? Well, if the miracles happen, it obviously means that the God of Abraham heard our prayer. Why did He hear our prayer? It must be because we must have prayed in the correct way, that is, in the name of Isa Almasih. Therefore if the miracles happen, that means that Isa Almasih is the only way to the God of Abraham."

The logic was inescapable. The people agreed that it would be a good way to determine the true way to the God of Abraham. Most believers would agree that this could be a very effective way of preaching the gospel. Then why is this approach hardly ever used? The answer is obvious. We entertain certain doubt. What if nothing happens? Then not only will we be embarrassed, we will have proven that Jesus Christ is *not* the only way to the God of Abraham! What kind of spirit is behind this way of thinking? It is none other than the spirit of fear.

So I called the trained pastors and leaders to come forward to the front. Their job was to heal the sick to prove that Jesus Christ is the only way to the God of Abraham. Before releasing them to minister, we first called on the God of Elijah and asked Him to send the fire of healing to prove that Jesus Christ is the way, the life, and the truth.

After prayer, I instructed the trained believers to lay hands on the sick and to heal them as they had been taught. And as they ministered, the Lord was faithful to perform miraculous healings through them. Each night those who were healed came up to the platform to testify of what the Lord had done for them. People with many different kinds of infirmities were healed, including the blind and the deaf. A man who had been unable to get up for months was brought to the meeting on a cot and he got up and began to walk around to the amazement of the onlookers. A demon of epilepsy was driven out. Two Muslim witchdoctors came to one meeting seeking healing for their infirmities. Their witchcraft was unable to cure them. But they were healed in the name of Jesus Christ and came forward to testify. We must acknowledge that not all the infirm people were healed. But many were healed and gave their testimonies before the crowd.

Each night I shared the gospel using different Scriptures, but always at the end asking the Lord to prove who He was through miraculous healings. Each night He responded with miracles through the trained believers. After the testimonies of miracles were over, I would give the invitation for the people to accept Jesus Christ as the only way to the God of Abraham, as their Lord and Savior.

"Well, through the miracles you have just witnessed, the God of Abraham has spoken to us. He has very clearly shown us that Jesus Christ is the only way to Him. Who now wants to believe on him as the only way to the God of Abraham?"

The result was that for the first time in the history of Niger, Muslims came to Christ in numbers. By the end of the Crusade, about two hundred Muslims had accepted Jesus, some of them entire families. This was totally unprecedented in Niger. Prior to the Crusade, Muslims came to Christ with great difficulty---one here, another there, never in numbers. The difference was that in the Crusade they heard the gospel and saw the confirming miracles.

After the meetings were over, Pastor Joel Biao from our one of our sponsors World Vision of Niger wrote me a report.

"...I can't still help smiling as I am trying to figure the way that God lead this Campaign. Of course Clive Cook (Director of World Horizons for West Africa, co-sponsor of the Campaign) and I started talking about this without any conviction the first day. And we did a very short prayer that day. I couldn't imagine, Brother William, that this would end into an event so great in the history of the Church in Niger."

"My life as a pastor and leader is really affected: I have learned to be bold in ministering the healing. I have got much more in faith. Through that campaign I can say God added something more to my faith. I could through the campaign know the kind of message we give when we try to bring people know the transforming power of God. I discovered that God can do much more as we try with humility to show that he is the almighty God. I also concluded that without signs, wonders and miracles we only do very little in winning the souls."

"The first important thing the campaign has achieved for the churches is the unity. That was the first time that really the churches worked together in a real spirit of unity. Also many barriers have been knocked down; indeed some of the churches that ministered healing didn't believe in it [at first]. They thought that is for the pentecostal churches [only]. Through your teaching and training they were convinced that anyone who is engaged in announcing the Good News in the name of Jesus can do so. Moreover, henceforth the churches are united and free to work together without any denominational discrimination. The church in Niamey is confident in preaching the Gospel with signs and wonders; the church knows how to handle the spiritual warfare; the church is really bold in preaching the Gospel."

"The Gospel will become effective in Niger as the Muslim people will themselves witness miracles in the name of Jesus. There will be much more fruit than what we had previously. The Church in Niger will become really bold and effective in reaching out to Muslim people. The harvest will be great."

According to one charismatic teaching, a believer must first be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues before the Lord can use that believer to perform miraculous healings. The merits of this teaching notwithstanding, it has had the unfortunate consequence of alienating non-charismatic evangelical churches and erecting walls of separation between them and charismatic churches. "Conventional wisdom" taught that signs and wonders were only for tongues-speaking charismatics and not for evangelicals. This has

turned out not to be true, whether through experience or based on the evidence of Scripture as we shall see later.

In our Niger Crusade we witnessed evangelical and charismatic pastors standing side-by-side ministering to the infirm, and God was using both to heal the sick. Barriers to unity and walls of denominational discrimination crumbled. The spirit of unity nurtured through the Campaign exists in Niamey to this very day even though evangelicals remain evangelical and charismatics remain charismatic. Miraculous healings continue to occur through the ministry of the local servants of God. Surely the Lord is pleased with the restoration of both unity and power to His Church in Niamey, Niger. The age of the big-name, one-man-show evangelist has run its course and is slowly coming to a close. The age of the faceless, nameless believer has begun.

Egypt 2002

In August 2002 our team held the largest evangelistic Crusade in the history of Egypt up until that time. Egypt is considered the head of Islam world-wide. Sponsored by the evangelical missionary organization Campus Crusade for Christ of Upper Egypt and the local Presbyterian Church, it was the first time the Egyptians witnessed miraculous healings on a mass scale at a Crusade. The Lord used the trained team members to heal hundreds of infirm people in Christ's name, drawing thousands of spiritually-hungry Egyptians to the meetings. At the meetings the crowd would surge forward and swarm around the team members to receive their healing as happened during the time of Jesus two thousand years ago.

As a result approximately ten thousand souls accepted Christ as Lord and Savior, including Muslims. By one estimate, one third of the people attending the meetings were Muslims.

Some very well-known preachers had tried to hold meetings in Egypt, but because of their fame they were ultimately denied permission. But a band of nameless, faceless believers was able to slip in and advance the Kingdom of God powerfully.

Shortly after the Campaign, we received a report from our primary host, the Director of Campus Crusade for Christ of Upper Egypt at that time. His name is Ashraf Kamel. He wrote:

"I want to thank you very much for your love. You and your team are a wonderful team. We saw and touched Jesus through the team. We saw and touched Jesus through your prayers, actions, behavior, words, and your ministry. You sacrificed with your time, money, effort, and all your life to come to minister people whom you don't know at all ... really this is Jesus' love. God bless you all.

When you came [on your first visit] last year and my family and I met to pray with you, I couldn't imagine at all what God would do in our country a year later [when you returned]. I spoke with you, I began to arrange [the Campaign] with other people but it never came to my mind that [we would witness such] great days.

Maybe you came with your team just for evangelistic meetings but for us it didn't really mean just that, you did more and more:

You changed our attitude about healing, you put [in its place] a new one. God used you to change our mind and thinking. It was the first time in El-Minia to have a conference about healing. All the leaders and the pastors were affected by that conference.

- You joined together two big church communities, the members of Campus Crusade in El-Minia with the members of the Evangelical Church in Saft El Laben in El-Minia, especially the leaders who become so close friends.

- You encouraged about 100 staff leaders and students in those days to work together for the new events
- I can confess that every member of my staff has at least one situation which makes him weep with many tears.
- It was the first time to see about 20,000 people [who] had very bad illnesses and circumstances in four days. We saw how much Satan had done; [it was a] great challenge to defeat him by healing people and casting out these illnesses and troubles....Can you see it was not only a matter of evangelistic meetings but also more than this? And I need more time to write more about these results.

My general observation and impression of this Campaign is wonderful:

- It was [not only] the first time in El-Minia, but also in Egypt to have an event like this, in that we had 20,000 people in four days in two meetings every day, these are historical events in Egypt. We made a big tent which held 5,000 chairs so that the attendance was about 5,000 people daily from different districts, towns, different levels in teaching [education], in living [standard], in different things.
- We held five clinics for different cases for men and women, old and children ... all kinds of people. We had about 1,500 cases through these four days. They received medicine, eyeglasses, and other things for free. Each case paid only [a nominal fee].
- The Basic Training encouraged the leaders and pastors to practice healing in their churches. It was a very new teaching in our churches.

As for my observation on the impact of the Campaign on the work of the gospel in El-Minia, I can say that it was more that we expected. My town is not large and I know many people. So after these events, many people saw me in the street and stopped me to ask many spiritual matters, they ask me to make it [the Campaign] again. Others say, I know you, you were the interpreter for Brother William ... how is he? ... and so on. And as I wrote in the beginning how it was wonderful for us.

About miracles: to see a blind person, and God opened his eyes, and to see a lame [person] walk, it did many things in our people in El-Minia: some were encouraged by their healing, others take new steps in faith, others asking God to have this power.

After you left many cases came to our office saying that we were healed but I couldn't stand up to give my testimony because of the crowd. Another came with her child, he was about four years old. He had a bad disease in his chest, now he is completely cured. An old man couldn't move, his son's wife came to our office to explain how God healed him in those days and other stories I have.

Let me share some of the statistics:

- about 20,000 people attended these meetings
- about 10,000 people accepted Jesus as their Savior
- about 1,500 were treated in clinics

Let me say I myself was changed in my life, faith, and attitude which makes me (as a Campus Crusade director) lead my staff in the office with a new power, new view, and new attitude.

The last miracle is spite of all these new attitudes, new concepts, new healing, and many new [things], we didn't face any attack from others till now but otherwise people love us and appreciate us."

Vietnam 2003

In July 2003 we were hosted by the Evangelical Vietnam Fellowship, a network of nearly thirty denominations and organizations. For the first two of days of our meetings, 250 pastors and leaders from nearly 30 mostly illegal denominations---including Baptist, Campus Crusade for Christ, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, and various local denominations---came together for training in our Basic Training. We had held Basic Trainings in many nations of the world, but never had we seen such a response. Because of the move of the Holy Spirit in the persecuted underground churches, miraculous healings had taken place. But lacking systematic Scripture-based teaching on this type of ministry, the pastors saw these things only sporadically.

When in the Basic Training it was laid out for them clearly from well over 200 references from Scripture, they were overjoyed. Eagerly they applied the teaching about healing to one another in the training sessions. Miraculous healings took place. One pastor came to the Basic Training, his body weak because of a heart problem that had also resulted in severe loss of his hearing. After two other pastors ministered to him, he testified with great excitement before the delighted group that his heart pain was gone, his body felt well, and his hearing was restored! Like the disciples in the gospels, the pastors at the Basic Training had been taught to "proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." (Luke 9:1, 2)

On the third day there was a large Evangelistic Crusade where non-believers were invited to come to hear the gospel and receive healing prayer. This was the very first mass meeting since the fall of this country to communism decades ago in which a foreigner was invited to speak. It turned out to be even more historic than that. Never before in the history of this country under communism had such a large meeting been known to take place.

My wife and I were taken to a hall completely crammed with thousands of people who had been waiting an hour before the start of the meeting. There was no place to sit down even for us. People with various debilitating infirmities had been physically carried to the meeting; the area to the side of the speaker's platform was filled with people in wheelchairs. Never before here had so many infirm people come to be healed by Jesus Christ. There was an air of expectancy.

The praise and worship, led by the local pastors, was vibrant and powerful. One of the pastors who had attended our Basic Training was so stirred that he read to the crowd the New Testament account of blind Bartimaeus who had been healed because of his faith. He then told the sick in the crowd to cry out to the Lord by faith as he ministered to them using the authority he had learned at the Basic Training. Cripples, paralytics, and stroke victims began to walk; some had not gotten up or walked in years. Many people were healed directly by the Lord without anyone laying hands on them or praying over them. A 40-year-old man deaf and dumb since birth could hear and speak, an emaciated woman with terminal cancer

who had been carried to the meeting by eight people walked up to the platform with arms raised to Heaven to testify that she was healed. Another woman with breast cancer came up and testified it had disappeared. The crowd roared with delight and gave praise to God. After several such testimonies, I was handed the microphone so I could preach. But time and time again, before I could begin speaking, commotion broke out in the crowd as another and another and still another person was healed and came up to testify. I could only stand there in awe at what I was witnessing. I couldn't help laughing and thinking to myself that the Lord wasn't about to allow me to speak. Even my host asked me if I actually had anything to say after all the miracles the Lord did...certainly it would be anti-climactic!

But I was reminded that the purpose of all the miracles was to bring precious souls to faith in Jesus Christ. I took the microphone and told them that *the overriding purpose of the great miracles* at which they had marveled was to provide the visible proof that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. The miraculous healings were the evidence that He had authority to forgive their sins and to save them from punishment in the next life, which many Asians dread. When I gave the invitation for non-believers to accept Christ, it appeared that about one-fifth of the crowd stood up. (Quite a few of those who had come to the meeting were already believers.) I led them in a sinners' prayer, and the angels in heaven rejoiced!

Then we ministered to those in the crowd who had not yet been healed. They laid hands on themselves and on one another and repeated after me as we exercised our authority over diseases and demons in the name of Jesus Christ. The Lord's power to heal appeared to be even greater than before. Elderly paralytics and bed-ridden people got up to walk normally and demonstrated their complete healing by squatting down and bending over. One 18-year-old woman had been blind in one eye since birth. The Lord opened the eye and she was able to see clearly with the eye. A government official who came to the meeting in a wheelchair got up out of the wheelchair and walked. In the days and weeks to follow, people healed in the meeting would testify in their own churches how the Lord had healed them of all manner of diseases. It was later reported that demon-possessed people were set free, and people suffering from depression were healed, no longer needing to take their medication. We will never know the full extent of all the miracles the Lord accomplished that evening. Not since the 1960's when American evangelists T. L. Osborn and Kathryn Kuhlman visited this country prior to its fall to communism had anything approaching this event occurred.

A video of the Crusade was produced and sent to about six hundred churches throughout Vietnam. Some infirm people who viewed the video were healed and accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. Some churches experienced revival after seeing it.

Afterwards, the pastors who had attended the Training began to minister with great power, healing the sick as they had been trained. Some began to teach others as they themselves had been taught, even in countries outside of Vietnam. The equipping of the saints had been effective.

Uganda and Benin

In February 2005 we were invited to Arua, Northern Uganda to hold The Elijah Challenge Basic Training. Afterwards we put it into practice at an evangelistic event. It was not a huge affair with a huge budget. Rather it was something that any small group of trained believers can do.

The event was held outdoors at a location where people were milling around---at a village marketplace. Without any announcements in the media or fanfare, our team of a handful of believers arrived and set up our sound system. Our worship team then took up their positions and microphones and began to sing and worship. The people at the marketplace began to notice us and were drawn to the sound of music. They trickled in slowly until there was a crowd of about a hundred people around the singers. Finally I came out of the pickup truck where I had been sitting and took the microphone in my hand. I announced to the crowd, "The God of heaven has sent us here to proclaim His Kingdom. In order that you may know that His Kingdom is near, we are going to ask Him to do miracles in your midst. We are going to ask Him to heal you of your physical infirmities. Please raise your hand if you have an infirmity and would like God to heal you."

This approach to proclaiming the Kingdom of God is in accordance with Jesus' command to his seventy disciples when he sent them out:

Luke 10:9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'

I looked around and saw a forest of hands go up. It seemed most of the people gathered there had infirmities and desired to be healed. Now it came time to deliver what I had said to them. I told the leaders and believers to go and heal the infirm people just as they had been taught in the Basic Training. They went and laid hands on the sick in Jesus' name, exercising their authority over the infirmities and demons with the faith of God. Soon miracles of healing began to occur and those who were healed came to me to give their testimony over the microphone. As the believers continued to minister, a line of ladies formed with each waiting to give her testimony. The line grew longer and longer as more and more people were healed through the laying of hands of the trained believers. As the testimonies went on one after another, the people who had gathered from the marketplace began to listen and pay attention. After all, they had never seen or heard of such a thing before...miraculous healings taking place in broad daylight.

The testimonies continued. One of the last testimonies was from a little boy. He had been brought to the market by his mother. He had some kind of large growth in his stomach causing it to bulge out. As a believer laid hands on him he could feel the power moving and working in his stomach.

After the testimonies I immediately began to share about the Kingdom of God. The miracles proved that the Kingdom of the only true God who created the heavens

and earth was near. I explained some of the characteristics of this Kingdom, in particular the life eternal given to those who entered this Kingdom. The only way to enter this glorious Kingdom, I stressed, was by faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God who died on the cross to bear our sins. When I asked how many wanted to escape from the kingdom of darkness and to enter the Kingdom of Light, between sixty and seventy-five people raised their hands. They raised their hands again when I asked if they wanted to believe on Jesus Christ as the only way into the Kingdom. Then I led these people in prayer to receive Jesus and follow Him as their Lord and Savior. The following Sunday some of these new believers went to a local church in the area bringing other sick people to be healed.

Of greatest significance is that the local churches here can now hold such meetings on their own. The Lord used *the local believers* to do the miracles, *not an outsider*. It was not necessary to holding a huge and expensive mass crusade featuring a specially-anointed servant of God from the outside. When many churches are trained in this way, the practice of witchcraft here can be wiped out. The Lord is restoring power to His Church for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Our local host for the Basic Training was Pastor Jimmy Kato, originally a refugee from Sudan. He reported later in the year: "We have open-air evangelistic meetings every Sunday evening using The Elijah Challenge method and it is beautiful."

In June 2006, Pastor Jimmy wrote me:

"Praise the Lord for the work the Lord is doing through your ministry. I am sorry for the delay in sending you the report after the Arua mission last year in February, but I think it is high time for you to know what is on the ground here. The Lord has done many things through the teaching you gave us in Arua. About four churches were opened outside of Arua by different church leaders who were in your Basic Training. Many miracles happened and are still happening as a result of The Elijah Challenge.

The church I pastor has grown twice (doubled) or more since you left. We have evening services every day and all-night meetings twice a week. I was the only pastor before but now we have four pastors.

I praise the Lord for using the family of Douglas and Anne Sampson for hosting you *in order to bring this great revival to Arua and beyond*. May the good Lord bless them and bless your ministry.

The pastors are now united and form a strong association now registered with the government of Uganda.

This is all about what God did in Arua. Let's continue to serve Him as long as we still have the chance. God bless you."

Benin, the birthplace of voodoo

The country of Benin in West Africa is known as the birthplace of voodoo in the world. Missionaries here report being under frequent attack and harassment by the powers of witchcraft. Even believers in Jesus Christ live under the fear of witchcraft. In late November 2003 we were given the opportunity of training local pastors and leaders in the capital city of Cotonou. Then on December 1 we began our evangelistic meetings.

We met in Lenin Plaza, which is in the middle of a busy intersection where seven streets converge from different directions like the spokes of a wheel. A traffic circle at the center forms the perimeter of the Plaza. We brought our worship team and our powerful speakers which could be heard for blocks around. There were no seats provided; by-standers, passers-by, and whoever happened to be drawn to the lights and music were our audience.

However, Cotonou is the largest city in Benin and unlike rural Arua in northern Uganda, its people are not so easily impressed. No one came up to enjoy the music and singing. People who passed by looked at us but kept walking. Those standing or sitting at a distance stayed where they were and did not approach us. So when I stood up, I grabbed the microphone and announced to all within the sound of my voice that we would ask the God of heaven to heal the sick to show that His Kingdom was near. "How many of you would like God to heal you?" I shouted into the microphone. I looked around the Plaza and saw many hands up in the air. "If you want God to heal you, then come and stand right in front of me!" Suddenly people with infirmities appeared from out of nowhere and stood in front of me---by my estimate, between one hundred and two hundred people. I told them that the miracles of healing would show them that "the Kingdom of God is near to you tonight."

I instructed the trained believers to come and minister healing for those who had gathered at the front. Within a few minutes, people began to come up to me to testify of their healings, including men, women, and children. The first person, a woman, told us at length that she had been unable to walk because of pain that had strangely moved about in her legs. The Lord had healed her as a believer ministered to her. After her were several more testimonies of healings. When I felt I really had the crowd's attention, I stopped receiving testimonies and began to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I told them they had just seen a dramatic demonstration that the kingdom of God was near (Luke 10:9). But in order to enter the kingdom of God, they had to believe in Jesus Christ.

After preaching about the demoniac of the Gadarenes from Mark Chapter 5, I challenged them to accept Christ. As far as I could see, most if not all of those who had come forward for physical healing also accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. They raised their hands and came forward with eagerness and no hesitation. The pastors and ministers saw how simple it was to bring souls into God's Kingdom, and some began to proclaim the gospel in this same way afterwards. Miraculous healings are a powerful and scriptural way to get people to listen to the gospel.

Acts 8:4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, *they all paid close attention to what he said.* 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

For the second evening we returned to Lenin Plaza. Like at the first evening, I told the people gathered there---more than the previous night---that we would ask God to prove that Jesus was His Son and the only way to Heaven. We would ask Him in the name of Jesus Christ to do miraculous healings that only He alone could do. If the miracles occurred, this would be the proof of the true identify of Jesus.

That second evening I sent the trained believers into battle to minister healing to the sick one-on-one. I call this "hand-to-hand combat in the trenches." They came out of the trenches with several miracles. The most notable miracle concerned a rough young man who was known around the immediate neighborhood as being completely deaf and mute as well as having an abnormally coarse demeanor. To the amazement of the people there, he came up to the platform, able to hear and speak and in his right mind. Shortly after the testimony a group of incredulous local boys streamed up to the platform to see him. Another young man testified of being healed of a hernia which would have cost him 500,000 francs to treat with surgery. There were numerous other testimonies as well.

Then I seized the opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I argued from Mark 2:10 that the miracles proved that Jesus had the authority to forgive their sin, the sin that had plunged them into suffering, sickness, demon oppression, voodoo curses, and eventual torment in hell. When I asked which of them wanted to have their sins forgiven, all of them standing in front of the podium raised their hands and prayed the sinners' prayer. Afterwards they eagerly met with counselors for follow-up.

At the end of the meeting, my translator, a brother named Theophan, spoke with me. He shared with joy that previous Crusades in Cotonou had cost more money, but did not bear the fruit that we had just seen.

One of most hosts in Cotonou, Pastor Joel Biao, wrote me in June 2006:

"I write to you regarding the follow-up I have been doing since The Elijah Challenge had the campaign in Benin in November 2002. ...Some local churches are experiencing great miracles in applying the lessons learned during your time in Cotonou. One of them is "Communauté des Frères Chrétiens," the church where you preached when you came to Cotonou and other local churches. I went to Cotonou with my team in July 2004 and in August 2005 for follow up and God did wonderful things."

This is the End Time Model of Evangelism. The entire body of Christ will be trained to do the works that Jesus did: proclaiming the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, casting out demons, and making disciples. The age of the big-time "one-man-show" evangelist is coming to a close; the age of the body of Christ is at hand. Huge and expensive Crusades will take on less and less significance as nameless and faceless believers take a greater role in preaching the gospel and healing the sick in smaller, even one-on-one evangelistic settings. Only when the entire body of Christ is mobilized can we complete the Great Commission.

Benin Revisited 2007

A local king ruled Kaboua, an area of about 60,000 inhabitants in the province of Savé five hours due north of Cotonou, the capital city of the Republic of Benin. Benin is already known as the birthplace of voodoo in the world, and Kaboua an area with a reputation of being especially saturated by the spirit of witchcraft and idolatry. Even Buddhism imported from Asia had established a foothold in Kaboua. Many who called themselves Christians would consult witch doctors to be treated for infirmities because their church or pastor could not help them.

On the first day we gave a brief introduction to The Elijah Challenge---the restoration of the spirit and power of Elijah to the Church for the fulfillment of the Great Commission during these last days. The messages were translated in the African dialect of Yoruba followed by a translation into French. At the end of the meeting we prayed and asked the Lord to demonstrate what we would be teaching them the rest of the week. Then we ministered healing-at-a-distance as Jesus did in Luke 7. Immediately afterwards about twenty-five people came to the front to testify that the Lord had healed them of some infirmity. One man testified that he literally felt the spirit of insanity come out of him, leaving him in his right mind along with a refreshingly cool sensation in his head.

Present at the initial session was a well-known witch endowed with dark powers which enabled her to perform strange supernatural feats. She had come expecting to receive her share of whatever it was that she thought we were offering.

First Equipping Session

The primitive dirt-floor Methodist Church was almost filled with people. We taught them to heal the sick and cast out demons as Jesus taught his disciples. At the end of the session, there was a demonstration. We had two sisters from the crowd come forward to lay hands on two women who were suffering from pain---one with chronic pain in various parts in her body; the other with arthritis in her legs. As we led the sisters in exercising their authority over the infirmities along with the laying on of their hands, both women were completely delivered from the pain and could walk and move around normally. When we asked for more people who wanted to be healed, perhaps a third of the people came to the front. To heal them we asked for believers present also to come forward to lay hands on them, filling the front of the sanctuary. Again we led the believers in ministering healing to the infirm. Many were healed and climbed up to the raised dirt area to testify of what the Lord had done for them.

Among the more memorable testimonies was that of an elderly man with such poor eyesight he could not even distinguish between a man and a woman. As he testified people were brought before him to test his eyesight. Sure enough, he was able to identify which were male and which were female. The only discrepancy was a

woman wearing sunglasses incorrectly identified by the elderly gentleman because of her sunglasses normally worn by a man.

Because there were so many who wanted to be healed we did not have enough people to minister to them. We had to pull people out of their seats to come to the front to lay hands on the infirm; some of these had even arrived late and missed most of the teaching. One middle-aged woman shuffled forward, bent over in obvious pain and could not straighten up. The sister who had been conscripted to minister to her followed our instructions and laid hands on her and rebuked the infirmity. The woman was then able to stand up straight. To the delight of the people she jumped up and down exuberantly to demonstrate that she had been completely set free and healed. Because of the number of people who had been healed by the Lord, we did not have time to receive all the testimonies.

Second Session

For the first demonstration of healing at the third session, a middle-aged woman came limping forward slowly with pain in her lower body including her back. Two sisters laid hands on her. After the first time, the limp was gone but there was still some pain in her back. After the second time the pain was completely gone and she was able to run back and forth at the front and then back to her seat. After that an elderly stroke victim with paralysis on one side shuffled forward very slowly led by a young man. After the laying on of hands by some believers he was much better, appearing to walk back and forth with a normal gait and with renewed use of his afflicted arm.

Third Session

We taught the people how Jesus healed a deaf man from Mark 7:32-35 and opened a blind man's eyes in Mark 8:22-25. To apply the teaching, we first asked for people with hearing problems to come to the front to be healed. Five men came forward, including one man who was deaf. We knew he was deaf because sitting in his seat he could not hear our instructions to come forward. People around him had to gesture to him to get up and go forward.

We called other believers to come up to heal them in Jesus' name. As they inserted their fingers into the ears as Jesus did and commanded the ears to be opened, the Lord performed miraculous healings. The deaf man could hear us and reply as we questioned him. The other four gave testimonies as well of being touched by the Lord.

Then we called forward those with problems with their eyesight. Many more people came up. The believers also ministered to them, touching their eyes and commanding them to be opened in Jesus' name. Although it took more time and effort than ministering to those with hearing loss, there were some powerful testimonies of the Lord's healing grace. Among other exciting reports, one elderly man's blind eye was opened up.

The Climax: Open-air Evangelistic Healing Crusade

Several hundred people were drawn to this open-air evening event held in a Kaboua neighborhood. They faced a wide platform built entirely of concrete or stone blocks laid down under plastic sheeting. The amplified music of African praise from the singers brought curious onlookers flocking to the meeting. As soon as I stood up to preach, I fired a shot across the bow of the stronghold of witchcraft, issuing a public challenge. I announced that there is only one true God who created the heavens and the earth and that He had sent us to proclaim His kingdom. He would be performing miraculous healings far greater than the power of witchcraft could do. Witchcraft is a sin, I said, that brings the consequence of eternal punishment in hell. When they see the miraculous healings, I told them that they should repent of their sins and witchcraft and believe on Jesus Christ---the One who died on the cross to bear their sins. His authority to destroy disease, the consequence of sin, would be the proof of His authority to destroy sin itself and grant eternal life.

Then we prayed to the God of Heaven in the name of Jesus Christ, asking Him to display His power to the people. Then together with the trained believers I rebuked the diseases and demons in Jesus' powerful name as the people with infirmities in the crowd laid hands on themselves. Many people were instantly healed and they came streaming up onto the stone platform to testify of what the Lord had done for them. The God of Elijah had heard our prayer and sent "fire" from heaven. Since most of the testimonies were not translated into English, I could not understand them. But the God of Elijah had performed dramatic miracles.

Immediately after the testimonies I called for people to repent of their sin and their witchcraft. Perhaps two hundred people came forward quickly and filled the area in front of the platform to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We taught them about following, obeying, and serving the Lord Jesus for the rest of their lives and prayed with them.

Then we began the next phase of the ministry in which those who had not yet been healed came forward to receive the individual laying on of hands by the trained believers. In this way many more people were healed by the Lord and climbed up to the platform to give the glory to God. That evening the Kingdom of God in Benin advanced forcefully and God was greatly glorified.

The next morning at our fourth and final teaching session in the Methodist Church we had surprise visitors---five town leaders sent by the king of Kaboua. They assembled at the front of the sanctuary with a message of gratitude. The king had been out-of-town and did not attend the Crusade meeting the previous evening. But after he heard what had happened at the event, he and his officials came to a momentous decision. They handed the area over to the Lord Jesus Christ to reign.

Now the way is opened for the Church to complete the Great Commission in Kaboua:

- They have been properly equipped to preach the gospel and heal the sick as Jesus commanded His disciples, and
- the local governing authorities have invited the Lord Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom over the area.

Now the Church here has two important mandates: one from Heaven as well as one from the earthly authorities.

At the Crusade meeting on the following evening, Pastor Joshua Odeyemi from Nigeria preached. According to Event Coordinator Pastor Joel Biao, "when he finished preaching, he prayed in general and invited those who were sick to come up. Then he asked us who followed your teaching [who were trained under The Elijah Challenge] to minister healing to them. There were so many people who came up that we left the place at midnight past. Many of them were healed."