

Supernatural

Mark 16:15-20

*"And these signs
shall follow
them that believe;"*

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Jesus instructed his disciples to go everywhere	4
Chapter 2	He told them to bring the message of salvation.	7
Chapter 3	He tells them to use the authority of the Word of God.	10
Chapter 4	They were to rely on the Holy Spirit to direct them.	13
Chapter 5	The Holy Spirit would give them unlearned languages.	16
Chapter 6	He gave them power over all evil forces.	18
Chapter 7	He would give them safety over food and drink.	22
Chapter 8	He gave them the power to heal the sick.	24
Chapter 9	Jesus is taken into heaven.	26
Chapter 10	He is seated at God's right hand	31
Chapter 11	The disciples went everywhere preaching the gospel	33
Chapter 12	Signs followed confirming the word.	36

Forward

Mark 16:15-20

And he said unto them “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

No man has power over himself.

Jesus instructed his disciples to go everywhere. He told them to bring the message of salvation.

He tells them to use the authority of the Word of God. They were to rely on the Holy Spirit to direct them.

The Holy Spirit would give them unlearned languages. He gave them power over all evil forces.

He would give them safety over food and drink. He gave them the power to heal the sick.

Jesus is taken into heaven.

He is seated at God’s right hand

The disciples went everywhere preaching the gospel Signs followed confirming the word.

Today, you too are a witness of these things found in the great commission.

Allow the Holy Spirit to work through you in spreading the gospel to all who will hear and receive.

Chapter 1

Jesus instructed his disciples to go everywhere.

Mark 16:15

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Jesus told his disciples to go into the entire world, telling everyone that he had paid the penalty for sin and that those who believe in him can be forgiven and live eternally with God. Christian disciples today in all parts of the world are preaching this gospel to people who haven't heard about Christ.

The driving power that carries missionaries around the world and sets Christ's church in motion is the faith that comes from the resurrection. Do you ever feel as though you don't have the skill or determination to be a witness for Christ? You must personally realize that Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you today. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, he will give you both the opportunities and the inner strength to tell his message.

Jeremiah 1:7-8

But the Lord said unto me, say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

God promised to "rescue" Jeremiah from trouble, not to keep trouble from coming. God did not insulate him from jailings, deportation, or insults. God does not keep us from encountering life's storms, but he will see us through them. In fact, God walks through these storms with us and rescues us.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Rather than fear our enemies, we are to quietly trust in God as the Lord of

all. We must believe that Christ is truly in control of all events. When he rules our thoughts and emotions, we cannot be shaken by anything our enemies may do.

Acts 1:8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary—that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive power to witness after they received the Holy Spirit. Notice the progression:

- (1) they would receive the Holy Spirit,
- (2) he would give them power, and
- (3) they would witness with extraordinary results.

Often, we try to reverse the order and witness by our own power and authority. Witnessing is not showing what we can do for God. It is showing and telling what God has done for us.

Jesus had instructed his disciples to witness to people of all nations about him (Matthew 28:19-20).

They were told to wait first for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). God has important work for you to do for him, but you must do it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We often like to get on with the job, even if it means running ahead of God. But waiting is sometimes part of God's plan. Are you waiting and listening for God's complete instructions, or are you running ahead of his plans? We need God's timing and power to be truly effective.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven

and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

God gave Jesus authority over heaven and earth. On the basis of that authority, Jesus told his disciples to make more disciples as they preached, baptized, and taught. With this same authority, Jesus still commands us to tell others the Good News and make them disciples for the kingdom.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for him, we should build our lives on his Word and build his Word into our lives—it alone tells us how to live for him and serve him.

Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of God’s Word is vital; otherwise, we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul was not ashamed because his message was the gospel of Christ, the Good News. It was a message of salvation, it had life-changing power, and it was for everyone. When you are tempted to be ashamed, remember what the Good News is all about. If you focus on God and on what God is doing in the world rather than on your own inadequacy, you won’t be ashamed or embarrassed.

Chapter 2

He told them to bring the message of salvation to everyone

Mark 16:15

And he said unto them, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

The message of salvation:

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

We become Christians through God’s unmerited grace, not as the result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service on our part. However, out of gratitude for this free gift, we will seek to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness, and not merely to please ourselves.

While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God’s intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service. We are not saved merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church (Ephesians 4:12).

Romans 4:1-5

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (2) For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. (3) For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (4) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (5) But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

The Jews were proud to be called children of Abraham. Paul uses Abraham as a good example of someone who was saved by faith.

By emphasizing faith, Paul is not saying that God’s laws are unimportant (Romans 4:13) but that it is impossible to be saved simply by obeying them.

If a person could earn right standing with God by being good, the granting of that gift wouldn’t be a free act; it would be an obligation. Our self-reliance is futile; all we can do is cast ourselves on God’s mercy and grace.

Jesus offers us salvation as a gift because he loves us, not because we have earned it through our powerful faith. What, then, is the role of faith?

Faith is believing and trusting in Jesus Christ and reaching out to accept his wonderful gift of salvation.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were still sinners—these are amazing words. God sent Jesus Christ to die for us, not because we were good enough, but because he loved us.

Whenever you feel uncertain about God's love for you, remember that he loved you even before you turned to him. If God loved you when you were a rebel, he can surely strengthen you, now that you love him in return.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

When we trust in Christ, we make an exchange—our sin for his righteousness. Our sin was poured into Christ at his crucifixion. His righteousness is poured into us at our conversion.

This is what Christians mean by Christ's atonement for sin.

In the world, bartering works only when two people exchange goods of relatively equal value. But God offers to trade his righteousness for our sin—something of immeasurable worth for something completely worthless.

How grateful we should be for his kindness to us.

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Christ's Good News of salvation and victory is not limited. It has been preached in the past as well as in the present; it has gone to the dead as well as to the living. God has given everyone the opportunity to come to him, but this does not imply a second chance for those who reject Christ in this life.

Romans 10:9-10

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Have you ever wondered how to become a Christian? These verses give you the beautiful answer—salvation is as close as your own mouth and heart. People think it must be a complicated process, but it is not. If we believe in our hearts and say with our mouths that Christ is the risen Lord, we will be saved.

Romans 10:13

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

To receive Jesus as your personal Saviour, you may pray the following prayers or any prayer of faith and repentance. He loves you and offers you eternal life through him.

Prayer for Salvation

Dear Lord Jesus,

I believe you are the Christ, the son of the living God. I ask you to come into my heart, forgive me of my sins and come into my heart and fill me with the Holy Spirit. I accept you as Saviour and honor you as Lord.

Chapter 3

He tells them to use the authority of the Word of God.

Mark 16:17

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Isaiah 55:11

So, shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God's word is never sent out without a purpose.

Psalms 119:89

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

Our lives are cluttered with rulebooks, but the authors never come with us to help us follow the rules. But God does. That is the uniqueness of our Bible. God not only provides the rules and guidelines but comes with us personally each day to strengthen us so that we can live according to those rules. All we must do is invite him and respond to his direction.

Deuteronomy 4:2

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

These laws were the word of God, and they were complete. How could any human being, with limited wisdom and knowledge, edit God's perfect laws?

To add to the laws would make them a burden; to subtract from the laws would make them incomplete.

Thus, the laws were to remain unchanged. To presume to make changes in God's law is to assume a position of authority over God who gave the laws (Matthew 5:17-19; Matthew 15:3-9; Revelation 22:18-19).

The religious leaders at the time of Christ did exactly this; they elevated their

own laws to the same level as God's laws. Jesus rebuked them for this (Matthew 23:1-4).

Revelation 22:18-19

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.

This warning is given to those who might purposefully distort the message in this book. Moses gave a similar warning in Deuteronomy 4:1-4.

We too must handle the Bible with care and great respect so that we do not distort its message, even unintentionally. We should be quick to put its principles into practice in our lives.

No human explanation or interpretation of God's Word should be elevated to the same authority as the text itself.

Hebrews 4:13

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Nothing can be hidden from God. He knows about everyone everywhere, and everything about us is wide open to his all-seeing eyes. God sees all we do and knows all we think.

Even when we are unaware of his presence, he is there. When we try to hide from him, he sees us. We can have no secrets from God. It is comforting to realize that although God knows us intimately, he still loves us.

Matthew 24:35

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Jesus' warnings about false teachers still hold true. Upon close examination, it becomes clear that many nice-sounding messages don't agree with God's message in

the Bible. Only a solid foundation in God's Word can equip us to perceive the errors and distortions in false teaching.

In times of persecution, even strong believers will find it difficult to be loyal.

To keep from being deceived by false messiahs, we must understand that Jesus' return will be unmistakable (Mark 13:26); no one will doubt that it is he.

If you have to be told that the Messiah has come, then he hasn't (Matthew 24:27). Christ's coming will be obvious to everyone.

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

“Eternal life”—living forever with God—begins when you accept Jesus Christ as Savior. At that moment, a new life begins in you (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It is a completed transaction. You still will face physical death, but when Christ returns again, your body will be resurrected to live forever (1 Corinthians 15).

Chapter 4

They were to rely on the Holy Spirit to direct them.

Mark 16:17

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

Luke 21:15

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

Jesus warned that in the coming persecutions their family members and friends would betray his followers.

Christians of every age have had to face this possibility.

It is reassuring to know that even when we feel completely abandoned, the Holy Spirit will stay with us. He will comfort us, protect us, and give us the words we need. This assurance can give us the courage and hope to stand firm for Christ no matter how difficult the situation.

Exodus 4:11

And the Lord said unto him, who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?

Moses pleaded with God to let him out of his mission. After all, he was not a good speaker and would probably embarrass both himself and God. But God looked at Moses' problem quite differently.

All Moses needed was some help, and who better than God could help him say and do the right things. God made his mouth and would give him the words to say. It is easy for us to focus on our weaknesses, but if God asks us to do something, then he will help us get the job done.

If the job involves some of our weak areas, then we can trust that he will provide words, strength, courage, and ability where needed.

Acts 4:8

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

The council asked Peter and John by what power they had healed the man (Acts 3:6-7) and by what authority they preached (Acts 3:12-26).

The actions and words of Peter and John threatened these religious leaders who, for the most part, were more interested in their reputations and positions than in God.

Through the help of the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11), Peter spoke boldly before the council, actually putting the council on trial by showing them that the One they had crucified had risen again.

Instead of being defensive, the apostles went on the offensive, boldly speaking out for God and presenting the gospel to these leaders.

Acts 6:10

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke.

The most important prerequisite for any kind of Christian service is to be filled with faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

By the Spirit's power, Stephen was a wise servant (Acts 6:3), miracle worker (Acts 6:8), and evangelist (Acts 6:10). By the Spirit's power, you can exercise the gifts God has given you.

Acts 7:2

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charran,

Stephen launched into a long speech about Israel's relationship with God. From Old Testament history he showed that the Jews had constantly rejected God's message and his prophets and that this council had rejected the Messiah, God's Son.

He made three main points:

- (1) Israel's history is the history of God's acts in the world;
- (2) People worshiped God long before there was a temple because God does not live in a temple;
- (3) Jesus' death was just one more example of Israel's rebellion against and rejection of God.

Stephen didn't really defend himself. Instead, he took the offensive, seizing the opportunity to summarize his teaching about Jesus. Stephen was accusing these religious leaders of failing to obey God's laws—the laws they prided themselves in following so meticulously.

This was the same accusation that Jesus had leveled against them. When we witness for Christ, we don't need to be on the defensive. Instead, we can simply share our faith.

Acts 7:55

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

Stephen saw the glory of God, and Jesus the Messiah standing at God's right hand.

Stephen's words are similar to Jesus' words spoken before the council (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69). Stephen's vision supported Jesus' claim and angered the Jewish leaders who had condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy.

They would not tolerate Stephen's words, so they dragged him out and killed him.

People may not kill us for witnessing about Christ, but they will let us know they don't want to hear the truth and will often try to silence us.

Keep honoring God in your conduct and words; though many may turn against you and your message, some will follow Christ. Remember,

Stephen's death made a profound impact on Paul, who later became the world's greatest missionary. Even those who oppose you now may later turn to Christ.

Saul is also called Paul (see Acts 13:9), the great missionary who wrote many of the letters in the New Testament. Saul was his Hebrew name; Paul, his Greek name, was used as he began his ministry to the Gentiles.

When Luke introduces him, Paul was hating and persecuting Jesus' followers.

This is a great contrast to the Paul about whom Luke will write for most of the rest of the book of Acts—a devoted follower of Christ and a gifted gospel preacher.

Paul was uniquely qualified to talk to the Jews about Jesus because he had once persecuted those who believed in Jesus, and he understood how the opposition felt. Paul is a powerful example of how no one is impossible for God to reach and change.

Chapter 5

The Holy Spirit would give them unlearned languages.

Mark 16:17

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

They shall speak in unlearned languages.

It is the spirit of man.

1 Corinthians 2:11

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Those who believe in Christ's death and resurrection and put their faith in him will know all they need to know to be saved. This knowledge, however, can't be grasped by even the wisest people unless they accept God's message. All who reject God's message are foolish, no matter how wise the world thinks they are.

The spirit of God interceding for man

Romans 8:26

Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

As a believer, you are not left to your own resources to cope with problems. Even when you don't know the right words to pray, the Holy Spirit prays with and for you, and God answers. With God helping you pray, you don't need to be afraid to come before him. Ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for you "in accordance with God's will." Then, when you bring your requests to God, trust that he will always do what is best.

The Holy Spirit spoke through them.

Acts 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This was a fulfillment of John the Baptist's words about the Holy Spirit's baptizing with fire (Luke 3:16) and of the prophet Joel's words about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

Why tongues of fire? Tongues symbolize speech and the communication of the gospel. Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sets our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others. On Mount Sinai, God confirmed the validity of the Old Testament law with fire from heaven (Exodus 19:16-18).

At Pentecost, God confirmed the validity of the Holy Spirit's ministry by sending fire. At Mount Sinai, the fire had come down on one place; at Pentecost, fire came down on many believers, symbolizing that God's presence is now available to all who believe in him.

God made his presence known to this group of believers in a spectacular way— violent wind, fire, and his Holy Spirit. Would you like God to reveal himself to you in such recognizable ways? He may do so but be wary of forcing your expectations on God. In 1 Kings 19:10-13, Elijah also needed a message from God. There was a great wind, then an earthquake, and finally a fire. But God's message came in a "gentle whisper." God may use dramatic methods to work in your life— or he may speak in gentle whispers. Wait patiently and always listen.

Man speaking unto God through tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:2

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

The gift of speaking in a tongue was a concern of the Corinthian church because the use of the gift had caused disorder in worship. Speaking in tongues is a legitimate gift of the Holy Spirit, but the Corinthian believers were using it as a sign of spiritual superiority rather than as a means to spiritual unity.

Spiritual gifts are beneficial only when they are properly used to help everyone in the church. We should not exercise them only to make ourselves feel good.

14:2ff Paul makes several points about speaking in tongues:

- (1) it is a spiritual gift from God (1 Corinthians 14:2);
- (2) it is a desirable gift even though it isn't a requirement of faith (1 Corinthians 12:28- 31);
- (3) it is less important than prophecy and teaching (1 Corinthians 14:4).

Although Paul himself spoke in tongues, he stresses prophecy (preaching) because it benefits the whole church, while speaking in tongues primarily benefits the speaker.

Public worship must be understandable and edifying to the whole church. Man's spirit prays, but his understanding is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14:14

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

If a person has the gift of speaking in tongues, he should also pray for the gift of knowing what he has said (interpretation) so he can tell people afterward. This way, the entire church will be edified by this gift.

There is a proper place for the intellect in Christianity. In praying and singing, both the mind and the spirit are to be fully engaged. When we sing, we should also think about the meaning of the words.

Chapter 6

He gave them power over all evil forces.

Mark 16:18

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The Greek word used here for serpents means “When you encounter a cunning or malicious person or even Satan, you shall have power over them.”

Luke 10:19

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Luke10:17-20 The disciples had seen tremendous results as they ministered in Jesus’ name and with his authority. They were elated by the victories they had witnessed, and Jesus shared their enthusiasm. He helped them get their priorities right, however, by reminding them of their most important victory—that their names were written in heaven. This honor was more important than any of their accomplishments. As we see God’s wonders at work in and through us, we should not lose sight of the greatest wonder of all—our heavenly citizenship.

Luke10:18-19 Jesus may have been looking ahead to his victory over Satan at the cross. John 12:31-32 indicates that Satan would be judged and driven out at the time of Jesus’ death. On the other hand, Jesus may have been warning his disciples against pride. Perhaps he was referring to Isaiah 14:12-17, which begins, “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn!” Some interpreters identify this verse with Satan and explain that Satan’s pride led to all the evil we see on earth today. To Jesus’ disciples, who were thrilled with their power over evil spirits (“snakes and scorpions”), he may have been giving this stern warning: “Yours is the kind of pride that led to Satan’s downfall. Be careful!”

Psalms 91:13

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

God is a shelter, a refuge when we are afraid. The writer's faith in the Almighty God as Protector would carry him through all the dangers and fears of life. This should be a picture of our trust—trading all our fears for faith in him, no matter how intense our fears. To do this we must “dwell” and “rest” with him (Psalm 91:1). By entrusting ourselves to his protection and pledging our daily devotion to him, we will be kept safe.

Isaiah 11:8

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

Assyria would be like a tree cut down at the height of its power (Isaiah 10:33-34), never to rise again. Judah (the royal line of David) would be like a tree chopped down to a stump.

But from that stump, a new shoot would grow—the Messiah. He would be greater than the original tree and would bear much fruit. The Messiah is the fulfillment of God's promise that a descendant of David would rule forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

God will judge with righteousness and justice. How we long for fair treatment from others, but do we give it?

Do we hate those who base their judgments on appearance, false evidence, or hearsay, but are we quick to judge others using those standards? Only Christ can be the perfectly fair judge. Only as he governs our hearts can we learn to be as fair in our treatment of others as we expect others to be toward us.

Judah had become corrupt and was surrounded by hostile, foreign powers. The nation desperately needed a revival of righteousness, justice, and faithfulness. They needed to turn from selfishness and show justice to the poor and the oppressed.

The righteousness that God values is more than refraining from sin. It is actively turning toward others and offering them the help they need.

A golden age is yet to come, a time of peace when children could play with formerly dangerous animals. Not all of this was fulfilled at Christ's first coming. For example, nature has not returned to its intended balance and harmony (see Romans 8:9-22). Such perfect tranquility is possible only when Christ reigns over the earth.

Ezekiel 2:6

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though

briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

God gave Ezekiel the difficult responsibility of presenting his message to ungrateful and abusive people. Sometimes we must be an example to or share our faith with unkind people. The Lord told Ezekiel not to be afraid and rebel, but to speak his words, whether or not the people would listen. He also wants us to tell the Good News, whether it's convenient or not (2 Timothy 4:2).

Three times God told Ezekiel not to be afraid. When God's Spirit is within us, we can lay aside our fears of rejection or ridicule. God's strength is powerful enough to help us live for him even under the heaviest criticism.

Acts 28:5

And he shook off the beast into the fire and felt no harm.

Paul continued to minister to others, even as a shipwrecked prisoner. On this trip alone, his centurion, the chief official of Malta, and many others were affected. It is no wonder that the gospel spread like wildfire.

Romans 16:20

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Jesus was bruised when he went to the cross, but he rose again.

Satan's head will be bruised, meaning, he will be destroyed never to rise again.

Chapter 7

He would give them safety over food and drink.

Mark 16:18

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Many of the present-day foods have flavors and preservatives in them that make people who eat them sick. The Lord has given us power over this.

The Bible tells us when we go to someone's home to eat that we are not to question the food but to eat what is served without question. Faith for food and drink protection is promised in these scriptures.

I knew a woman who was in a meeting where Brother Charles Fox Parham was preaching. He always kept a drink of water nearby.

Someone put poison in it. When he drank it, he knew it had a different kind of taste. After service, he took the rest of the water to be checked. The doctor said that it still had enough poison in it to kill seven men. Brother Parham felt no harmful effects from the poison.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Why should we be limited by another person's conscience? Simply because we are to do all things for God's glory, even our eating, and drinking. Nothing we do should cause another believer to stumble.

We do what is best for others so that they might be saved. On the other hand, Christians should not make a career out of being the weaker person with oversensitive consciences. Christian leaders and teachers should carefully teach about the freedom we have in matters not expressly forbidden by Scripture.

God's love must so permeate our motives that all we do will be for his glory. Keep this as a guiding principle by asking, "Is this action glorifying God?" or "How can I honor God through this action?"

Genesis 9:3

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

1 Timothy 4:4-5

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: [5] For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Paul said the false teachers were hypocritical liars who encouraged people to follow “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” Satan deceives people by offering a clever imitation of the real thing.

The false teachers gave stringent rules (such as forbidding people to marry or to eat certain foods). This made them appear self-disciplined and righteous. Their strict disciplines for the body, however, could not remove sin (see Col. 2:20-23).

We must not be unduly impressed by a teacher’s style or credentials; we must look to his teaching about Jesus Christ. His conclusions about Christ show the source of his message.

In opposition to the false teachers, Paul affirmed that everything God created is good (see Genesis 1). We should ask for God’s blessing on his created gifts that give us pleasure and thank him for them. This doesn’t mean that we should abuse what God has made (for example, gluttony abuses God’s gift of good food, lust abuses God’s gift of love, and murder abuses God’s gift of life).

Instead of abusing, we should enjoy these gifts by using them to serve and honor God. Have you thanked God for the good gifts he has given? Are you using the gifts in ways pleasing to you *and* to God?

Isaiah 1:19

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

There is plenty of everything in God’s house for the willing and obedient.

Philippians 4:19

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

We can trust that God will always meet our needs. Whatever we need on earth he will always supply, even if it is the courage to face death as Paul did.

Whatever we need in heaven he will supply. We must remember, however, the difference between our wants and our needs.

Most people want to feel good and avoid discomfort or pain. We may not get all that we want. By trusting in Christ, our attitudes and appetites can change from wanting everything to accepting his provision and power to live for him.

Chapter 8

He gave them the power to heal the sick.

Mark 16:18

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The Greek word used here for the laying on of hands means to grasp hold of evil forces that bind the sick and they shall be made whole.

Matthew 10:1

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Jesus **called** his 12 disciples. He didn't draft them, force them, or ask them to volunteer; he chose them to serve him in a special way. Christ calls us today. He doesn't twist our arms and make us do something we don't want to do.

We can choose to join him or remain behind. When Christ calls you to follow him, how do you respond?

James 5:15

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

James is referring to someone who is incapacitated physically. In Scripture, oil was both a medicine (see the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37) and a symbol of the Spirit of God (as used in anointing kings, see 1 Samuel 16:1-13).

Thus, oil can represent both the medical and the spiritual spheres of life. Christians should not separate the physical and the spiritual—Jesus Christ is Lord over both the body and the spirit.

People in the church are not alone. Members of Christ's body should be able to count on others for support and prayer, especially when they are sick or suffering.

The elders should be on call to respond to the illness of any member, and the church should stay alert to pray for the needs of all its members.

“The prayer offered in faith” does not refer to the faith of the sick person, but to the faith of the people praying. God heals, faith doesn’t, and all prayers are subject to God’s will.

But our prayers are part of God’s healing process. That is why God often waits for our prayers of faith before intervening to heal a person.

John 14:12

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Jesus is not saying that his disciples would do more amazing miracles—after all, raising the dead is about as amazing as you can get. Rather, the disciples, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, would carry the gospel of God’s kingdom out of Palestine and into the whole world.

Isaiah 53:4

Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

John 14:13

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Jesus is not saying that his disciples would do more amazing miracles—after all, raising the dead is about as amazing as you can get. Rather, the disciples, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, would carry the gospel of God’s kingdom out of Palestine and into the whole world.

Chapter 9

Jesus is taken into heaven.

Mark 16:19

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.

Acts 1:9-12

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.

It was important for the disciples to see Jesus taken up into heaven. Then they knew without a doubt that he was God and that his home was in heaven.

After 40 days with his disciples (Acts 1:3), Jesus returned to heaven.

The two men dressed in white were angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day Jesus would return in the same way he went—bodily and visibly.

History is not haphazard or cyclical; it is moving toward a specific point—the return of Jesus to judge and rule over the earth. We should be ready for his sudden return (1 Thess. 5:2), not by standing around “looking into the sky,” but by working hard to share the gospel so that others will be able to share in God’s great blessings.

After Christ was taken up into heaven, the disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and had a prayer meeting. Jesus had said they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days, so they waited and prayed.

When you face a difficult task, an important decision, or a baffling dilemma, don’t rush into the work, and just hope it comes out the way it should. Instead, your first step should be to pray for the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance.

Luke 24:50-53

And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. (51) And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. (52) And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: (53) And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Seeing Jesus leave must have been frightening, but the disciples knew that Jesus would keep his promise to be with them through the Holy Spirit. This same Jesus, who lived with the disciples, who died and was buried, and who rose from the dead, loves us, and promises to be with us always. We can get to know him better through studying the Scriptures, praying, and allowing the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus.

Jesus' physical presence left the disciples when he returned to heaven (Acts 1:9), but the Holy Spirit soon came to comfort them and empower them to spread the gospel of salvation (Acts 2:1-4).

Today Jesus' work of salvation is completed, and he is sitting at God's right hand, where he has authority over heaven and earth.

Luke's Gospel portrays Jesus as the perfect example of a life lived according to God's plan—as a child living in obedience to his parents and yet amazing the religious leaders in the temple, as an adult serving God and others through preaching and healing, and finally as a condemned man suffering without complaint.

This emphasis was well suited to Luke's Greek audience, who placed a high value on being an example and improving oneself, and who often discussed the meaning of perfection.

The Greeks, however, had a difficult time understanding the spiritual importance of the physical world. To them, the spiritual was always more important than the physical.

To help them understand the God-man who united the spiritual and the physical, Luke emphasized that Jesus was not a phantom human but a real human being who healed people and fed them because he was concerned with their physical health as well as the state of their souls.

As believers living according to God's plan, we too should obey our Lord in every detail as we seek to restore people's bodies and souls to the health and salvation God has in store for them. If we want to know how to live a perfect life, we can look to Jesus as our example.

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Mary did not want to lose Jesus again. She had not yet understood the resurrection. Perhaps she thought this was his promised second coming (John 14:3). But Jesus did not want to be detained at the tomb. If he did not ascend to heaven, the Holy Spirit could not come. Both he and Mary had important work to do.

Mary did not meet the risen Christ until she had discovered the empty tomb. She responded with joy and obedience by going to tell the disciples. We cannot meet Christ until we discover that he is indeed alive, that his tomb is empty. Are you filled with joy by this good news, and do you share it with others?

Matthew 18:10

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Jesus told the crowd that many religious Jews who should be in the kingdom would be excluded because of their lack of faith. Entrenched in their religious traditions, they could not accept Christ and his new message.

We must be careful not to become so set in our religious habits that we expect God to work only in specified ways. Don't limit God by your mindset and lack of faith.

“The east and the west” stand for the four corners of the earth. All the faithful people of God will be gathered to feast with the Messiah (Isaiah 6; Isaiah 55). The Jews should have known that when the Messiah came, his blessings would be for Gentiles too (see Isaiah 66:12, 19).

But this message came as a shock because they were too wrapped up in their own affairs and destiny.

In claiming God's promises, we must not apply them so personally that we forget to see what God wants to do to reach all the people he loves.

Matthew emphasizes this universal theme—Jesus' message is for everyone. The Old Testament prophets knew this (see Isaiah 56:3, 6-8; Isaiah 66:12, 19; Malachi 1:11), but many New Testament Jewish leaders chose to ignore it.

Each individual has to choose to accept or reject the gospel, and no one can

become part of God's kingdom on the basis of heritage or connections. Having a Christian family is a wonderful blessing, but it won't guarantee you eternal life. You must believe in and follow Christ.

Revelation 5:9-13

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

People from every nation are praising God before his throne. God's message of salvation and eternal life is not limited to a specific culture, race, or country. Anyone who comes to God in repentance and faith is accepted by him and will be part of his kingdom. Don't allow prejudice or bias to keep you from sharing Christ with others. Christ welcomes all people into his kingdom.

The song of God's people praises Christ's work. He

- (1) was slain,
- (2) purchased them with his blood,
- (3) gathered them into a kingdom,
- (4) made them priests, and
- (5) appointed them to reign on the earth.

Jesus has already died and paid the penalty for sin. He is now gathering us into his kingdom and making us priests. In the future, we will reign with him.

Worship God and praise him for what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do for all who trust in him.

When we realize the glorious future that awaits us, we will find the strength to

face our present difficulties.

The believers' song praises Christ for bringing them into the kingdom and making them kings and priests. While now we are sometimes despised and mocked for our faith (John 15:17-27), in the future we will reign over all the earth (Luke 22:29-30).

Christ's death made all believers priests of God—the channels of blessing between God and mankind (1 Peter 2:5-9).

Revelation 21:4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The New Jerusalem is where God lives among his people. Instead of our going up to meet him, he comes down to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among us (John 1:14).

Wherever God reigns, there is peace, security, and love.

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” is described as the place where God will “wipe every tear from their eyes.” Forevermore, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying.

What a wonderful truth! No matter what you are going through, it's not the last word—God has written the final chapter, and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for those who love him.

We do not know as much as we would like, but it is enough to know that eternity with God will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

Chapter 10

Jesus is seated at God's right hand

Mark 16:19

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.

Romans 8:34

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Paul says that Jesus is interceding for us in heaven. God has acquitted us and has removed our sin and guilt, so it is Satan, not God, who accuses us. When he does, Jesus, the advocate for our defense, stands at God's right hand to present our case.

1 Peter 3:22

Who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Jesus has unlimited access to God's throne where makes intercession for the prayers of his people.

He asks God to help the people that their faith will not fail.

Acts 2:33

Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

He "has poured out what you now see and hear" could be paraphrased, "gave Jesus the authority to send the Holy Spirit, with the results you are seeing and hearing today."

Hebrews 7:25

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

No one can add to what Jesus did to save us; our past, present, and future sins are all forgiven, and Jesus is with the Father as a sign that our sins are forgiven. If you are a Christian, remember that Christ has paid the price for your sins once and for all. (See also Hebrews 9:24-28.)

As our high priest, Christ is our advocate, the mediator between us and God. He looks after our interests and intercedes for us with God. The Old Testament high priest went before God once a year to plead for the forgiveness of the nation's sins; Christ makes perpetual intercession before God for us.

Christ's continuous presence in heaven with the Father assures us that our sins have been paid for and forgiven (see Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:15-16; Hebrews 9:24). This wonderful assurance frees us from guilt and from fear of failure.

Chapter 11

The disciples went everywhere preaching the gospel

Mark 16:20

And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Acts 4:30

By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Notice how the believers prayed. First, they praised God; then they told God about their specific problem and asked for his help. They did not ask God to remove the problem, but to help them deal with it.

This is a model for us to follow when we pray. We may ask God to remove our problems, and he may choose to do so. But we must recognize that often he will leave the problem in place and give us the strength and courage to deal with it.

This Herod was Herod Antipas, appointed by the Romans to rule over the territory of Galilee. For more information on Herod, see his Profile. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor over Judea. He bowed to pressure from the crowd and sentenced Jesus to death. For more information on Pilate, see his Profile.

God is the sovereign Lord of all events who rules history to fulfill his purpose. What his will determines, his power carries out. No army, government, or council can stand in God's way.

Boldness is not reckless impulsiveness. Boldness requires courage to press on through our fears and do what we know is right. How can we be bolder? Like the disciples, we need to pray with others for that courage.

To gain boldness, you can:

- (1) pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to give you courage,
- (2) look for opportunities in your family and neighborhood to talk about Christ,
- (3) realize that rejection, social discomfort, and embarrassment are not necessarily persecution, and

(4) start where you are by being bolder in small ways.

Acts 8:4-6

Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. [5] Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. [6] And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Persecution forced the believers out of their homes in Jerusalem, and along with them went the gospel.

Sometimes we have to become uncomfortable before we'll move. We may not want to experience it, but discomfort may be the best thing for us because God may be working through our hurts. When you are tempted to complain about uncomfortable or painful circumstances, stop and ask if God might be preparing you for a special task.

Acts 14:3

Long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

We may wish we could perform a miraculous act that would convince everyone once and for all that Jesus is the Lord. But we see here that even if we could perform a miracle, it wouldn't convince everyone.

God gave these men power to do great wonders as confirmation of the message of grace, but people were still divided.

Don't spend your time and energy wishing for miracles. Sow your seeds of Good News on the best ground you can find in the best way you can and leave the convincing to the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:8-10

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: [9] The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, [10] Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (7) So, then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. (8) Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. (9) For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Paul planted the seed of the gospel message in people's hearts. He was a missionary pioneer; he brought the message of salvation.

Apollos's role was to water—to help the believers grow stronger in the faith. Paul founded the church in Corinth, and Apollos built on that foundation. Tragically, the believers in Corinth had split into factions, pledging loyalty to different teachers (see 1 Corinthians 1:11-13).

After the preachers' work is completed, God keeps on making Christians grow. Our leaders should certainly be respected, but we should never place them on pedestals that create barriers between people or set them up as a substitute for Christ.

God's work involves many different individuals with a variety of gifts and abilities. There are no superstars in this task, only team members performing their own special roles.

We can become useful members of God's team by setting aside our desires to receive glory for what we do. Don't seek the praise that comes from people—it is comparatively worthless. Instead, seek approval from God.

Hebrews 2:4

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

“God also testified to it” continues the thought from Hebrews 2:3. Those who had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on his words also had the truth of their words confirmed by “signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” In the book of Acts, miracles and gifts of the Spirit authenticated the gospel wherever it was preached (see Acts 9:31-42; Acts 14:1-20).

Paul, who discussed spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4, taught that their purpose is to build up the church, making it strong and mature.

When we see the gifts of the Spirit in an individual or congregation, we know that God is truly present. As we receive God's gifts, we should thank him for them

and put them to use in the church.

Chapter 12

Signs followed confirming the word.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Hebrews 2:3-4

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; [4] God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The author called his readers to pay attention to the truth they had heard so that they wouldn't drift away into false teachings. Paying careful attention is hard work. It involves focusing our minds, bodies, and senses. Listening to Christ means not merely hearing, but also obeying (see James 1:22-25). We must listen carefully and be ready to carry out his instructions.

“The message spoken by angels” refers to the teaching that angels, as messengers for God, had brought the law to Moses (see Galatians 3:19).

A central theme of Hebrews is that Christ is infinitely greater than all other proposed ways to God. The author was saying that the faith of his Jewish readers was good, but faith must point to Christ.

Just as Christ is greater than angels, so Christ's message is more important than theirs. No one will escape God's punishment if he or she is indifferent to the salvation offered by Christ.

Eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry had handed down his teachings to the readers of this book. These readers were second-generation believers who had not seen Christ in the flesh. They are like us; we have not seen Jesus personally.

We base our belief in Jesus on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible. See John 20:29 for Jesus' encouragement to those who believe without ever having seen him.

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Acts 14:3

Long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

We may wish we could perform a miraculous act that would convince everyone once and for all that Jesus is the Lord. But we see here that even if we could perform a miracle, it wouldn’t convince everyone. God gave these men power to do great wonders as confirmation of the message of grace, but people were still divided. Don’t spend your time and energy wishing for miracles. Sow your seeds of Good News on the best ground you can find in the best way you can, and leave the convincing to the Holy

Romans 15:19

Through mighty signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

We were all born into Adam’s physical family—the family line that leads to certain death. All of us have reaped the results of Adam’s sin. We have inherited his guilt, a sinful nature (the tendency to sin), and God’s punishment.

Because of Jesus, however, we can trade judgment for forgiveness. We can trade our sin for Jesus’ righteousness. Christ offers us the opportunity to be born into his spiritual family—the family line that begins with forgiveness and leads to eternal life. If we do nothing, we have death through Adam; but if we come to God by faith, we have life through Christ.

To which family line do you belong?

1 Corinthians 4:9-13

For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. [10] We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. [11] Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; [12] And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: [13] Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off scouring of all things unto this day.

How easy it is for us to become attached to a spiritual leader. When someone has helped us, it's natural to feel loyalty. But Paul warns against having such pride in our favorite leaders that we cause divisions in the church. Any true spiritual leader is a representative of Christ and has nothing to offer that God hasn't given him or her.

Don't let your loyalty cause strife, slander, or broken relationships. Make sure that your deepest loyalties are to Christ and not to his human agents. Those who spend more time debating church leadership than declaring Christ's message don't have Christ as their top priority.

2 Corinthians 1:6

And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Paul explains that he and his companions suffered greatly for bringing "comfort and salvation" to the Corinthians. But just as God comforted Paul, God would also comfort the Corinthian believers when they suffered for their faith. He would give them the strength to endure.

John 14:12

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Jesus is not saying that his disciples would do more amazing miracles—after all, raising the dead is about as amazing as you can get. Rather, the disciples,

working in the power of the Holy Spirit, would carry the gospel of God's kingdom out of Palestine and into the whole world.

Acts 9:33-42

And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. (34) And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. (35) And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord. (36) Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. (37) And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. (38) And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. (39) Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. (40) But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. (41) And he gave her his hand and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. (42) And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

The important harbor city of Joppa sits 125 feet above sea level overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Joppa was the town into which the cedars of Lebanon had been floated to be shipped to Jerusalem and used in the temple construction (2 Chron. 2:16; Ezra 3:7).

The prophet Jonah left the port of Joppa on his ill-fated trip (Jonah 1:3).

Dorcas made an enormous impact on her community by

1. "Always doing good and helping the poor,"
2. By making robes and other clothing (Acts 9:39).

When she died, the room was filled with mourners, very likely many of the people she had helped. And when she was brought back to life, the news raced through the town.

God uses great preachers like Peter and Paul, but he also uses those who have gifts of kindness like Dorcas. Rather than wishing you had other gifts, make good use of the gifts God has given you.

You are God's witnesses.

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