

THE FAITH BUILDER

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Issue No 2.

27 January 2013

=====

From The Editor

This is the second issue of the magazine. My sermon at St Aidan's this week is about true conversion. It is important that we regularly examine ourselves against the principles of God's Word to ensure that we are continuing in the faith. We have an enemy who is looking for any "chink in the armour", to get us to succumb to temptation, develop ideas and theories which are contrary to what is taught in God's Word. You would be surprised at how many different notions that people have that pass for Christian conversion. Some of those notions have no comparison at all with the Gospel that Jesus and Paul set forth. It seems that many think that God automatically forgives even though they continue to live a life that is contrary to the development of sanctification and holiness. They think that wandering to the front of the church and signing a decision card makes them into a true Christian. Others seem to think that if they involve themselves in the outward rituals of religion that they will be accepted of God at last. Such people will receive a rude shock one day when Jesus might say to them "I never knew you." True Christian conversion involves a change of heart, of attitude, and a change of masters. If you are concerned to know more about what is and isn't true Christian conversion, email me and I will send you the complete sermon.

It is my position that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to Christians today. The belief of many religious people that the supernatural and miracles ceased after the apostolic age is, in my opinion, absolute nonsense, totally unsupported by Holy Scripture. I would even go so far as to say it is a lie of the devil, whose purpose is to keep the Church in a powerless state,

ineffective in winning souls to Christ, and limited to barren religious ceremonies while members needlessly suffer sickness and premature death. I believe that a minister or preacher who refuses to preach that Jesus can and will heal people today, is not a Gospel preacher. He is preaching another gospel, and therefore is not a true representative of Christ. I also believe that so called Christian churches, if they reject the supernatural gifts and tools that come with the Holy Spirit, and who will not acknowledge that the Holy Spirit baptises believers to give them power for service, are more accurately called "synagogues of satan" than true Christian churches.

There was no Christian church before the Day of Pentecost. All there was consisted of religion, either Jewish or Pagan. When the Holy Spirit came and filled the 120 believers in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost, the Christian Church was born. Take the supernatural nature of the Holy Spirit away from a group of church people and you take the Holy Spirit Himself away. That group can no longer call itself a Christian church because it is the involvement of the supernatural nature of the Holy Spirit that makes a church Christian. Where does that leave many church groups in our land who maintain the theoretical religious principles that make up a form of Christian godliness, but deny the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit? If a church group rejects the supernatural person of the Holy Spirit, then they are rejecting the Father and the Son. All they can do after that is to talk about God and Jesus, but fall short of having a dynamic personal relationship with them. They can be very religious and moral, but they cannot be Christian unless they acknowledge the presence and the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit.

True Christian conversion, then, consists of a total change of attitude toward Christ, a personal relationship with the Father, and a welcoming of the infilling of the Holy Spirit with His supernatural gifts and ministries. Truly converted Christians will fully support the willingness of Jesus to heal the sick, they will take authority and cast out demons from those who are in bondage to them, they will

acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit in developing sanctification in believers, and they will unhesitatingly share the Gospel with unbelievers, warning them that unless they are truly converted, they face an eternity of misery and regret.

If you do a careful reading of the New Testament, you will see that what I am saying is true, and explains why many churches are declining and ineffective in getting souls saved for Christ. To get souls out of the kingdom of darkness and truly converted one has to believe the Gospel as the New Testament teaches it without deleting sections that do not fit in with "the comfort zone". This is what this magazine is about – to increase your faith, make you a stronger, Spirit-filled Christian, making full use of the tools and abilities that come through the Holy Spirit in order to win souls for Christ.

Paul Christensen, 10 January 2013.

Being Quiet In Church

A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?" Annie replied, "Because people are sleeping "

Sunday School Lesson

At Sunday School they were learning how God created everything, including human beings. Johnny was especially intent when the teacher told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs.

Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, "Johnny, what is the matter?"

Johnny responded, "I have pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES

Are They Necessary Today?

By Paul Christensen

When the Gospel was preached in the early church, signs, wonders and miracles were a routine feature. Healings, deliverances and miracles were an essential part of the ministry of the Lord Himself, and His intention was that those who followed Him in ministry were to do the works He did, and even greater works (John 14:12). He showed what was available to believers through sending out the seventy disciples to share the message in the surrounding towns and villages (Luke 10:1-20). These disciples came back and shared their amazement at the same miracles that happened with Jesus happened when they ministered.

After the Holy Spirit fell on the believers at Pentecost, the Apostles experienced healings and miracles as they shared the Gospel to the Jews around them. The healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful was just one example (Acts 3), and 5,000 people came to Christ as a result. People were healed just by the shadow of Peter falling on them (Acts 5:12-16). Church historians had no doubts that the preaching of the Gospel was accompanied by miracles at that stage of the history of the Church.

We also see signs and wonders accompanying the preaching of Stephen (Acts 6:8-9), and Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8). These men were appointed firstly as deacons in the early Church, and then were promoted by the Spirit to be evangelists. It is significant that these men, as well as the Apostles, saw signs and wonders when they brought the good news of the Gospel to sinners. This suggests that anyone who was called of the Spirit to preach the Gospel in early Church times could expect their preaching to be confirmed with signs and wonders following.

We see the same happening in the ministry of the Apostle Paul (Acts 14:3) when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to minister for the Lord, the prayer of the group was that signs and

wonders be done through their hands. One of many answers to that prayer happened on Malta when Paul was shipwrecked. Many people on the island who came to Paul for ministry were miraculously healed (Acts 28).

Paul described the way in which the Gospel should be preached when he told the Corinthians: "and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). This shows us that signs and wonders, which show the power of the Holy Spirit, are essential components in the preaching of the Gospel, and makes the words of the message more powerful in the hearts of those who hear it and see the miracles.

So, we have a good foundation in Scripture that the preaching of the Gospel was accompanied by supernatural acts which showed that the God, the Apostles and others presented to the Jews and Gentile nations was a Living God Who was intensely involved in the ministries of those He had called to be His witnesses.

MIRACLES REINFORCE THE MESSAGE

The purpose of miracles in the early phase of the Church was to reinforce the message of the Gospel to those who were steeped in traditional worship of God, based on the Mosaic Law, and to Gentile people who worshipped many gods and would need something very special to get them to change their beliefs. The miracles that happened could only have been done by a God Who was alive and had the power to supernaturally heal diseases, disabilities, raise the dead, and deliver people from demons. Exposed to the power of God, Gentile idolators would realize that their own gods were powerless to do these things, and they would then know that what they worshipped were figments of their imaginations, rather than real gods who could answer their prayers and relieve their suffering.

As the church became formalized, the gifts of the Spirit, including healing and miracles died out. This was mainly because church leaders were putting their trust in the organization and traditions of the Church instead of the living Christ. But through

church history, there were groups who chose to keep to the teaching of Scripture, and they were the ones who saw the continuation of the gifts of the Spirit and miracles. Many of these groups came under intense persecution from the official Church, and the operation of the supernatural became discredited.

It is interesting that the gifts of the Spirit continued for much longer in the Eastern Orthodox Church which had its center at Constantinople. This is because the Western Church had to take over government functions after the barbarian invasions dismantled the previous stable government. But the Eastern Church did not have to enter the political sphere because the secular government remained strong in Constantinople and therefore the Church was more free to carry on with the precepts that existed in the early church. It was not until the late 1400's that the Eastern Church became formalized to the point where the gifts of the Spirit all but disappeared.

After that, for a very long time, the Church carried on its functions without evidence of general signs, wonders, and miracles occurring. This caused commentators to believe that the supernatural miracle-working power of God ceased after the First Century A.D. Some actually taught that God meant for it to pass away at that time, because now that the Church had the written Scriptures, miraculous demonstrations of God's power were no longer needed.

With the emergence of supernatural healing during the late Nineteenth Century as part of the Holiness Movement and the infancy of the Pentecostal Movement, the realization that God may be wanting signs and wonders to accompany the preaching of the Gospel re-emerged.

In spite of much opposition from the traditional churches, supernatural healings took place more increasingly during evangelistic crusades and tent meetings, and the late 1940's and 1950's were periods in which many genuine healings took place. One significant world-wide ministry, during the 1920's that featured healing and miracles was that of Smith Wigglesworth, producing many testimonies of healing, backed-up with medical reports

confirming that healing took place when the medical profession had given up on them.

So, we have now seen the Biblical foundation, and some historical information about signs and wonders; and now we want to move on to looking at the purpose of miracles and what part they play in the preaching of the Gospel today.

MIRACLES BACK UP THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

The purpose of miracles, as shown in the Gospels, Acts, and letters of Paul, is to back up the preaching of the Gospel. Miracles can only be produced by a living God who is real, and who is concerned with souls, and prepared to intervene in a supernatural way in the lives of people. Miracles are not for the self-indulgence of religious people. There is a facility for Christian believers to receive healing, and this is described in the book of James: "Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14). Any Christian believer in a church can get prayer for healing, and expect to be supernaturally healed. This is part of the operation of the Holy Spirit gift of healing (1 Corinthians 12:9).

But signs and wonders, which show the awesome power of God, are reserved for the preaching of the Gospel. The early church preachers had to overcome serious opposition from unbelieving Jews, and Gentiles steeped in idolatry. Just mere words were not enough to convince these people in the numbers that were needed to consolidate the infant Church. We have already seen that the miracle of Pentecost, where Jews from all the regions round and about, heard the praises of God in their own dialects (Acts 2:1-13). This miracle brought 3,000 to the Lord in one day. The miracle of the healing of the lame man brought another 5,000 people to the Lord. The signs and wonders following Stephen and Philip brought great numbers to the Lord. It shows, then, that when signs and

wonders follow the preaching of the Gospel, great numbers of people come to the Lord.

When we look at what is happening today, we see that the traditional denominations that do not believe in miracles, are barely keeping up with the population growth, and in many areas are declining in numbers. It was said by a deacon in my church recently that "people are no longer interested in religion any more." He may be right if his definition of "religion" is the message of the traditional churches (which are composed of just words and nothing much else).

There are many missionaries and evangelistic organizations preaching the Gospel, but not acknowledging the importance of supernatural signs following the preaching, so they are wondering why it is so difficult to get people converted, and once they get some conversions, why it is difficult to keep them from backsliding after the 'novelty' wears off.

It is significant that those Christian groups that believe God is working today with supernatural miracles, healing, and deliverance from demons, are the fastest growing groups. It is also very significant that in Third World countries where there is a much stronger belief in the supernatural, that the Christian Churches there are seeing many more miraculous events happening in their midst, and it is common to see over a million people turning up to an evangelistic crusade.

My conviction is that we need signs, wonders, and miracles today just as much as they were needed in early Church times, to ensure that people who hear the Gospel preached know that we are dealing with the Living God of the Bible and not just another religion coming from someone's imagination. Some asked me at one time, "How do we know that Christianity wasn't invented by some mad monk?" The answer to that question would be a demonstration of the miracle working power of God that would arrest and amaze that person and make her to know beyond doubt that the Christian faith is the plan of the Living God Who made heaven and earth. This is

what convinced many hardened idolators in the First Century Gentile world.

The religious people ~ who are teaching that we don't need miracles today because we have a written Bible and a worldwide Church (albeit in different denominations) ~ do not understand what is happening in our modern society. Our Western society has been moving towards neo-paganism for some time. Our own Prime Minister (New Zealand) has stated that we are no longer a Christian society.

Also, there has been the emergence of all kinds of sects and cults saying that they are Christian. We already know about Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists, claiming that they are the only true churches of Christ, and any serious Bible student can easily know by their theology that they do not follow the orthodox teaching of the Bible. But there are other cults which are so close to the true Christian Church, that it is not easy to identify them as pseudo-Christian cults following and worshipping a god of their own imagination, instead of the God of the Bible.

Two chilling examples are:

(1) The Branch Davidians who was fronted by a very personable and convincing preacher who started off teaching on the same apocalyptic material (about the end times) that many other genuine churches were teaching at that time. But it was the hidden motives and intentions of David Koresh that raised concerns, and the fruit of his ministry was that most of his followers perished in the fire that burned down their meeting center at Waco, Texas, USA.

(2) The People's Temple, run by Jim Jones. This was indistinguishable from any standard Pentecostal Church; in fact, his basic foundation learning was in a Pentecostal Church, and therefore he modeled his cult on Pentecostal practice to the point that most of his church members thought they were worshipping in one. One member said that he never saw the practices that Jim Jones was reported to have been engaging in that raised concerns about his movement. But finally the truth came out when many of the

members were forced to commit suicide at Jones Town that Jim Jones was far from being a standard, Bible-believing Pentecostal preacher, but a paranoid psychopath who was more concerned about building his own exclusive world than seeking to truly worship God.

So, how can we preach the Gospel in our society with so many counterfeits around? The normal person on the street would find it very difficult to distinguish between the true Gospel and the false counterfeit, especially if the style and words of the preaching are basically the same.

In New Zealand, there is a cult called the "Cooper-ites" which have been raising concerns, and the founder of that cult has been in trouble with the law. Yet the group started as a standard Pentecostal Church group, preaching fairly standard doctrine. But it is possible that the seeds of their deception were always there and when those seeds germinated, the departure from genuine to false doctrine came to the surface.

When I was young, I was able to identify the traditional churches as being genuinely Christian. I knew that the Salvation Army was also a genuine Christian Organization. But I didn't know whether the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Pentecostals, or other independent churches were true or false. I came to the conclusion that the Exclusive Brethren were a 'funny lot' because they didn't allow their members to go to movies, watch television or listen to the radio.

So when I was introduced to a Pentecostal Church, I was ready to run away from it because I was putting it on the same level as the other cults I had heard about. It was the realization that this church believed in a Living God Who healed people and did other miracles that convinced me that I was in a genuine Christian Church. When I thought about these things, I realized that no false cult can have genuine signs and wonders happening as part of their ministry. This is because the signs and wonders that come from the Holy Spirit accompany the preaching of the true Gospel, which is squarely founded on the teaching of the New Testament.

Jesus did say that in the last days false prophets will arise who will perform signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24). These false signs and wonders will glorify the false prophets themselves. True signs and wonders will lift Christ up on high and will glorify Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. False signs and wonders will induce people to join up with that false prophet's cult, while true signs and wonders will draw sinners to Christ and place more importance on serving and worshipping Him more than belonging to any church or organization.

This is the beauty of the Charismatic Movement where people of all denominations are baptized in the Holy Spirit and are exercising the gifts. These things are not church-based, but it is something that is happening in existing churches. But when someone decides to take the experience and build his own church around it, then there is the danger of that church becoming a false cult. Even the truth, when it is falsely presented, can end up deceiving true believers away from the purity of their faith.

The conclusion to this is that we, as genuine believers, wanting to fulfill the great commission to preach the Gospel and make disciples of every nation, need the miracle working power of God to cause signs and wonders to follow our preaching. How are we going to set up an environment that allows the Holy Spirit to flow freely to show God's power in the preaching of the Gospel?

WE NEED TO BASE OUR FAITH ON THE WORD OF GOD

Firstly, we need to base our faith squarely on God's Word, and believe that the same power that gave supernatural demonstration to the preaching of the Word in the early Church is fully available to us today. In God's view, it has never gone away; Christians have departed from their belief in the miracle working power of God in that they have put their trust in natural methods to bring the Gospel to people. We need to see that natural methods are not working. We need to believe more strongly that we can

preach the Gospel with the demonstration of the Spirit and with the power of God.

Secondly, we need to be bold in the preaching of the Gospel and be prepared to go into places where others would be afraid to venture. Paul often put himself in harm's way preaching the Gospel, and he often paid the price in beatings and stonings for his trouble. There were times where he had to get out of a city because there was a plot to kill him. He had to leave a city because of the trouble that was being brought on the church because of him, and he didn't want the believers there to be troubled any further, because it was him the opposing Jews were after. But Paul was not unwise about putting himself in danger. He didn't do it senselessly. He only remained in a dangerous situation when he knew that the Spirit would be there to protect him. But we do need to be more open and obedient to the Spirit and be prepared to go into difficult environments to bring the Gospel to sinners who otherwise might not get the opportunity to hear the good news.

Thirdly, we need to be more forthright and urgent in our prayers for God's miracle working power to be present when we preach the Gospel. Here is an account of a prayer meeting that got results:

"... they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'You made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand

and the rulers gather together against the Lord

and against his Anointed One.'

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable

Your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.'

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:24-31).

Firstly, they acknowledged the Lord as "Sovereign Lord". They were praying to the Living God and acknowledged that because of Him the heavens and the earth were created. They also quoted Scripture to Him to remind Him of what He says, by His Spirit, to David. They then applied the Scripture to their recent experience with Herod and the people of Israel and their opposition to the Gospel. But they acknowledged that what they were doing was intended by God by His power and foreknowledge. They then asked God to consider the threats of those people.

It is very interesting that they did not pray to be delivered from the threats so that they could escape them. What they asked for was boldness to speak the Word of God. They were not intending to be defeated or to retreat from the opposition of those who wanted to neutralize and destroy the infant Church.

But they knew that they needed more than boldness to preach the Word. They knew that they needed the direct involvement of God to show His mighty power to heal the sick and to confirm His Word with signs and wonders. They fully acknowledged that these signs and wonders would come from God and be performed in the Name of Jesus. It was not to bring glory to the Church, but to draw sinners to Christ and to show the opposition that it was not just a weak group of believers they were wanting to destroy, but they were coming up against the Living God and the risen Christ whom the Church represented.

The result of that prayer was immediate. They had a 'localized earthquake' as the Holy Spirit arrived afresh among them

and refilled them, and they went out from there and spoke the Word with boldness with signs following.

So, how strong is our faith?

How much do we believe the Word of God?

Do we believe that the same power that was available to the believers in the early Church is available to us today?

I believe that the Holy Spirit is challenging me to accept that signs and wonders are necessary for us today if we are to expect that sinners in our unbelieving Western neo-pagan society are to believe the Gospel.

We can expect three reactions to the appearance of signs and wonders:

(1) Large numbers of people will come to Christ.

(2) Many in the established church will oppose and persecute us.

(3) When others in our society start to lose their lucrative incomes through drugs, alcohol, and prostitution because of the large numbers of these people coming to Christ, they will seek to neutralize our efforts to preach the Gospel. This is what happened to Paul in Ephesus when large numbers of idol worshippers were coming to Christ and the silversmiths who made silver models of Diana's temple saw that they were going to lose income (Acts 19:26-29).

But these things should not cause us to be afraid and to shrink from preaching the Gospel, because He has promised to be with us and support us. See what the Holy Spirit said to Paul when he was in a difficult situation: "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city'" (Acts 18:9-10). We can receive the same promise. No matter how difficult the situation, we will not come to any harm unless there is a purpose for it, and the Lord will see us through, even if He performs miracles to accomplish it.

If this article inspires you to start seeking God for His miracle working power to be a part of your ministry, then this article is bearing fruit. This is what I believe the Lord is saying to me. I want

to encourage you to be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11).

Also, you will see when you examine false cults and churches that hold to New Age theology, that there are no recorded miracles or healings taking place in their meetings. Therefore, one of the most convincing proofs that the Holy Spirit is fully involved with a Christian group is that the gifts of the Spirit and miracles are taking place along with their preaching of the Gospel.

Mark 16:17-18 says: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ...they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." This is what the early Church believed would accompany the Gospel they preached. Now, skeptical people will say that this passage does not appear in the earliest manuscripts, but if Bible-believing Christians in the Second Century A.D. added this reference, it was because they not only believed it was so, but they were still experiencing signs and wonders when they preached the Gospel to sinners.

So, are we prepared to add the reference to our articles of faith? Do we really believe that when we preach the Gospel, either in our churches, or on the street, that we will be able to drive out demons and heal sick people by the laying on of hands? Smith Wigglesworth believed it in the 1920's and he accepted that these things were an essential part of the Gospel he preached ~ in his meetings, and his personal ministry to people. His testimony was a living example of the miracle working power of God working in tandem with his preaching ministry. Because God is no respecter of persons, He can do this for you as readily as He did it for him. It is only the level of our faith that holds it back.

The message of this article is that God is absolutely willing to demonstrate His healing and miracle working power on behalf of those who are totally committed to presenting Christ as Saviour to lost sinners. God is totally committed to glorifying the Name of Jesus:

"Father, glorify Your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not Mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:28-32).

This is how I believe that the Father will glorify the Name of Jesus in these days. As we preach the Gospel, He will confirm our preaching with signs and wonders. This is the way He is going to be lifted up before the world. As Jesus healed the sick, drove out demons, raised the dead, cleansed lepers, and gave sight to the blind during His ministry on earth, He will do the same today.

What we need to do is to get into the presence of God, wait on Him and pray until we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that when we exercise our faith God will honour it with signs and wonders. We cannot do these things in our own strength. We need to be led of the Spirit.

"Lord, send a revival, and start the work in me!"



(See Exodus 14) 04-20-1999
I THINK THAT YOU HAVE SOME SERIOUS FAITH ISSUES

FAITH MESSAGE

No. 31

The Benefits Of Exercising Spiritual Gifts

By Rodney W. Francis

When we make an open and honest appraisal of what the Bible teaches on Spiritual Gifts, we see that there are wonderful benefits to be had. They are given so that we might be edified ("the act of building, built up; a confirmation"), exhorted ("edification, spiritual profit or advancement, inspired") and comforted ("to comfort through speech, a soothing medication") (1 Corinthians 14:3). They are given **"that all may learn and all may be encouraged"** (1 Corinthians 14:31).

- **Every person needs to be the recipient of the gifts and their benefits.**
- **There is a spiritual dimension that we cannot receive any other way.**

When we are not functioning and exercising Spiritual Gifts we are actually "robbing" others of these needy benefits. No wonder the Bible tells us to **"desire them earnestly"** (1 Corinthians 12:31; 1 Corinthians 14:1, 39), to stir them up (2 Timothy 1:6), to so love people that we want to do the utmost good to them, that the gifts will operate in and through us to encourage others. Spiritual Gifts functioning encourage us to press in to God and enable us to know His "now" word for us. It is not surprising, therefore, that we are told that **"all may**

prophecy" (1 Corinthians 14:31); that we are **"not to despise and prophecies"** (1 Thessalonians 5:19), but rather to **"take heed to the prophetic words spoken over our lives"** (1 Timothy 1:18-20). Through prophetic words spoken over our lives we are able to fight a much better warfare against the tactics of the enemy against us; we are able to hold on to faith more definitely, because we know more clearly the word and will of God for us personally; and we also are able to have a clean, pure conscience that enables us to obey the voice of the Lord when it comes to us. Without a clear conscience, whenever God speaks, the enemy comes and pricks our conscience and accuses us of things we have done wrongly, etc., and that has the effect of stopping us from being obedient (because we have a guilty conscience).

- **Spiritual Gifts in operation are God's idea.**
- **They are not something that man has dreamed up.**
- **They are a vital part of New Testament Christianity.**
- **We neglect them to our loss.**

My experience is that operating in the Spiritual Gifts has opened the world to me to minister. I have seen more lives converted to Jesus Christ, backsliders restored, spiritual, emotional and physical healings take place, the call of God revealed, people finding their rightful place in God's purpose, etc., through the operation of the Spiritual Gifts than any other way of ministry. Why so many churches and church leaders neglect and ignore them puzzles me. We can never accomplish in our own efforts what the Holy Spirit can **when we listen to Him, obey Him and release His gifts to the people.** It is a

totally different realm to the “norm” of “accepted Christian beliefs” which (through ignorance and neglect) we then have to settle for lesser results and fruit. May God open our eyes more to see more of the ways of the Holy Spirit and His wonderful gifts.

According to 1 Timothy 4:14-16, the exercising of the gifts of God in our lives brings benefits to all ~ to those who hear us, and to us as well. **God always blesses obedience.** I well remember the time when the Holy Spirit spoke to me and told me to keep exercising His Spiritual Gifts, for every time I did that, I was untying His hands to set my future up! How blessed and encouraged I have been to know that ~ and to see the impact of it! Yes, every time you and I exercise Spiritual Gifts we are enabling God to set our future up for us! That’s great!

The place of prophecy and prophesying is presented all the way through the Bible. It has always been a part of God’s way of speaking and ministering to His people. Prophecy received and acted upon enables us to prosper:

“So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel . . .” (Ezra 6:14).

The people were inspired and motivated to do what God had called them to do. And He used prophecy to do that! He still uses prophetic words and other Spiritual Gifts to reveal, inspire, confirm and motivate people today. Theology will never accomplish what a man or woman inspired of the Holy Spirit can! The word “prospered” in the above verse means “to accomplish successfully; to reach the goal” (Wilson’s). It is time for us to stop being ignorant of the prophetic realm so we can all accomplish

successfully the purposes of God and reach the goals He has given us! We are naïve if we think we can fulfil the purposes of God for our lives without the input of the prophetic word.

Christians are commanded to be baptized in the Holy Spirit so they can know power, a spiritual language (speaking in other tongues) to communicate spirit to Spirit to God, and to prophesy (Acts 1 & 2). The nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit are in the Holy Spirit and, when the Holy Spirit comes into us, we have them inside of us. Our responsibility is to strongly desire to release them to bless and build up others. To do that we have to see that it is very Scriptural to desire to release them, and then to give ourselves to God in an earnest and sincere way until we get the release and breakthrough in exercising them to bless others. That desire has to be stronger than any and every reason or excuse we may have as to why we are not functioning in them. **You will never regret breaking through and seeing God using you in wonderful ways by His Holy Spirit.** I know ~ from the word of God and my own experience ~ that the Christian life is much more effective and fruitful when we are flowing in the Spiritual Gifts. They are all a part of exercising faith ~ and faith exercised pleases the heart of God (Hebrews 11:6)!

The Prophetic Equips And Strengthens Us

In 1 Timothy 1:18-20 the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to remember and take heed to the prophetic words that had been spoken over his life. He said those prophetic words (prophecies) would enable him to **"wage the good warfare, having faith, and a good conscience."** Paul gives Timothy three distinct benefits of being a recipient of prophetic words. **When we take**

heed to and believe what is spoken to us prophetically, we are better equipped to fight the spiritual battles the enemy brings against us to make us doubt, and take us out of the will of God . . . to settle for less, and therefore be less effective in the Kingdom of God. Satan likes to challenge our believing the promises of God and seeks to undermine the principles of our faith. He tries to foul our conscience in such a way we will not be able to obey the voice of the Lord.

One reason why there is so much deception around today is because many Christians have not been exposed to the benefits of the true prophetic ministry, and therefore do not recognize or understand the subtleties and schemings of Satan. As a result their faith is not anchored in the confirmation of what the prophetic and Spiritual Gifts bring for us. Notice in 1Timothy 1:18-20 that Paul named two men who were ridiculing the prophetic ministry, and Paul delivered them over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme ("speak evil, defame"). Think about this for a moment. Paul so valued the place of the prophetic that those who spoke negatively and generally turning people away from believing it, were called blasphemers. That is serious! We do need to be careful on how we respond and/or re-act to prophetic ministry. This is especially so today, as there is so much ignorance about the prophetic realm, including Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1).

I find it amazing how many Christians will try and talk us out of the will of God! I know for me that if it was not for numbers of prophetic words confirming the way of God's call for me, I most likely would not be doing what I'm doing today ~ and thousands would be robbed of this teaching of the prophetic and Spiritual Gifts. I am so grateful that I was saved in a church that believed in and

allowed the prophetic to function. The prophetic has taught me what to say “Yes” to, and what to say “No” to. When you know and believe what God is saying to you, it certainly helps one in the making of major decisions. And making decisions according to the revealed will of God for our life always brings forth “more fruit.” Yes, there are extra benefits when we take heed to the Prophetic Ministry and the exercising of Spiritual Gifts. God bless you.

Rodney is the Founder/Director of The Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry which ministers into more than 107 nations to thousands through literature, Bible Correspondence Courses, books, manuals, preaching/teaching, E-Mail and Internet Ministries, conducting Seminars, Schools Of The Holy Spirit, Prophetic Equipping Schools and the Equipping of Timothy’s. He has authored 35 books and carries a heart to see this generation of believers equipped with leadership skills to do the job of fulfilling the purposes of God. He ministers out from Paraparaumu, New Zealand. Feel free to share this Message with others. Previous Faith Messages (No. 1-30) can be found on our Website.

For further spiritual help, literature and/or a free Bible Correspondence Course, and to get on to our free E-Mailing Ministry List,
Articles on The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit and Prophetic Ministry,
Please contact us at Head Office:

The Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry
P O Box 57
Paraparaumu 5254
New Zealand
Telephone: (00 64) 4 904 0727
E-Mail: gfm@gospel.org.nz
Visit our Website: www.gospel.org.nz

Our Ministry Statement is:
“Equipping for Leadership in the Nations through the Power of the Holy Spirit.”

~



"Loved the sermon. Hated casual Sunday."

The Sunday School teacher was describing that when Lot's wife looked back at Sodom she turned into a pillar of salt, when Bobby interrupted. "My mommy looked back once while she was driving," he announced, "and she turned into a telephone pole."

Another Sunday School teacher said to her children, "We have been learning about how powerful the kings and queens were in Biblical times. But there is a higher power. Who can tell me what it is?" Tommy blurted out, "I know, Aces."

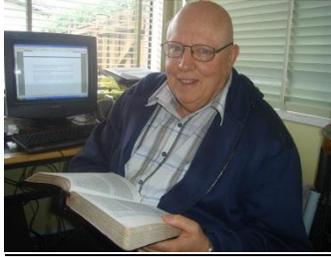
After explaining the commandment to honor your father and mother, a Sunday School teacher asked her class if there was a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters.

One boy, the oldest in his family, immediately answered, "Thou shalt not kill."

Lot again... A father was reading Bible stories to his young son. He read, "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee out of the city, but his wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt."

His son asked, "What happened to the flea?"

The Editor



Paul Christensen

I first became a Christian in an Assembly Of God church in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, in 1966, under the ministry of Trevor Chandler. This was the first time I realized that I needed to make a definite, personal commitment to Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I guess I heard the voice of Christ in my heart then, but did not have the maturity to recognize it as such, but I obeyed it and that is the main thing.

About two years later, I felt the need to have a closer relationship with God as a person and set out to seek him more earnestly. One night, in the middle of a golf course, in desperation, I told Him that people had been able to introduce me to church, Bible Study, prayer, appropriate Christian living, etc., but no one had been able to introduce me directly to God. So, I said "I am Paul, and you are God, and I am very pleased to meet you." Immediately, I felt as though I were lit up inside, and I heard Him say, "Paul, we have been waiting for this for a long time." It was a comforting, assuring voice that spoke deep in the back of my mind. This has continued from that time until this.

Although I have been involved with Anglican and Baptist churches during the last 20 years, I am now an Elder of St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Conifer Grove in Auckland. I am also involved in the Gospel Faith Messenger ministry with its Prophetic Equipping Days and other outreaches, seeking to empower Christians to hear and recognize the Voice of God making His will clear to them. It is with this in mind that I trust that this booklet will be of assistance to you.

Email: paul90@slingshot.co.nz