

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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## NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES OF HEALING (Part Two)

### Does the Gospel of Christ Promise Us Health and Wealth?

by Ted J. Clarke

#### Introduction

Last month's article demonstrated the vast differences between genuine New Testament miracles of healing as described in Scripture and the fake so-called miraculous healing of our present day. (If you did not receive last month's issue, you may write and request a copy.) In the July issue we clearly showed that the pretended miracles of today do not even come close to matching the nature and character of miracles of healing revealed in Scripture.

Another aspect which we deal with in this issue is the false teaching of many modern-day "healers" that the gospel of Jesus promises each person freedom from illness (complete health) and freedom from material desires (financial prosperity). Some have characterized this as the "health and wealth gospel." This article considers only the "health" part of this teaching. Since the proclaimers of this false doctrine claim that "health and wealth" are part of the same promise, if we can show God did not promise to heal everyone of physical disease, their whole system collapses.

#### The Purpose of Miracles

The major purpose of miracles, healing or other kinds, was to confirm God's messenger and message! A reading of Exodus, chapter four, illustrates this point. In verse 1, Moses worried that the people "will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." God gave Moses the miracle power to turn his rod into a snake and back to a rod again; "That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers... hath appeared unto thee" (verses 2-5). God also gave Moses the power to work two additional signs for further proof to Israel that he was a spokesman for the Lord (verses 6-9). When Moses and Aaron went before Israel they "spake all the word which the

Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed..." (verses 30-31). These miracles were signs to Israel that Moses was a chosen spokesman for God and they produced the desired result. Throughout the history of God's dealing with man as He revealed His will, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, God confirmed His messengers and message through miraculous signs.

Jesus pointed to the works He did as testimony that He was sent by God to speak God's word. After healing the crippled man at Bethesda (John 5:1-17), Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In verse 37 He noted, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." After giving the apostles the promise of miraculous signs, telling them to go forth "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," the Scripture says, "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following**" (Mark 16:15-20). It doesn't get any clearer than that! The miraculous signs were to "confirm" the messengers and their message as from God! Acts 14:3 echoes the same thought, stating, "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."

Miracles bestowed upon the apostles and other first century Christians were of a twofold nature. Some miraculous gifts were for the purpose of **revealing** God's word, such as prophecy and knowledge; while others were for the purpose of **confirming** the revelation as being from God, such as healings and others workings of miracles (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). At the close of the writing of the New Testament, when God's revelation had been completed and proof of its coming from God had been confirmed to

a sufficient number of witnesses, these miraculous gifts ceased, having completed their purpose intended by God. We have, in our Bibles, the record of that revelation and eyewitness testimony of its confirmation. The miraculous gifts have ceased, as Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:8-16.

#### Faithful Christians Who Were Ill

Several New Testament Christians, who were obviously faithful, were sick physically and no instruction was given to them to seek miraculous healing as an answer to their health problems. In some cases physical remedies were recommended, in others no remedy at all was given. Remember please, that this is the case even though the ability to work miraculous healing was still present in the church in the first century. This alone proves that God did not intend to remove all physical sickness from Christians in any century!

Matthew 25:35-40 shows that Christ knew that there would be sick believers, whom He identified as "these my brethren" in verse 40. Notice too that these brethren were not wealthy, but depended upon the benevolence of others for food and clothing (verses 35-36). The apostle Paul mentioned Timothy's illness and prescribed a natural medicinal remedy, not a miraculous healing (1 Timothy 5:23). Paul also notes he left Trophimus **sick** at Miletum (2 Timothy 4:20); and stated that Epaphroditus, a faithful co-worker with Paul, had been "sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him" (Philippians 2:25-27). Although he was doing the Lord's work, he became sick and nearly died, "not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" [Paul] (Philippians 2:30). There is no indication that this great soldier of the cross was miraculously healed. His recovery may have been providentially through prayer. The text gives the impression of a prolonged illness from which he gradually recovered by God's mercy. There has never been a greater servant of the Lord than Paul, yet he had to endure great poverty and illness (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

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Concerning one infirmity of his flesh, Paul prayed to God for relief three times, but was denied healing either through miraculous or providential means. Illness can be used by God to strengthen our dependence upon him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). The promise of complete health and financial wealth to all Christians is an illusion conjured by false teachers and fake healers to attract followers who hope for these things. While miracles of healing did occur in the first century during the time the New Testament was being revealed, such miracles were provisional and ceased when revelation was completed (cf. Mark 16:15-20; Acts 14:3; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

**No Miraculous Healing Today**

If there are no miracles of healing today, does that mean that Christians have no ability to ask God for healing? Not at all. God can answer our prayers for divine healing and deliverance from illness through His providential power, using ways unknown to us, apart from miraculous signs and the laying on of hands. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us**: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Miraculous healing, with or without the laying on of hands by those specially gifted in the first century, was a sign of God's working either in revelation of His will or in confirmation of it. Thus,

the miraculous aspect of healing ceased when completed revelation of God was confirmed (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). God can heal today, and we can pray for His providential, but non-miraculous, intervention as in the Scripture above. In our conclusion to this article we will show further that God does not heal miraculously through the laying on of hands by so-called healers.

Christians are promised the strength to overcome illness, persecution, and other trials which life brings (James 1:2-4, 12; 1 Corinthians 10:13). God placed physical death as a universal penalty for sin in Genesis 3:17-19. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that cometh the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Sickness and accidents will be a part of that dying until Christ returns. Otherwise, no Christian would ever die! But we do, and so do the so-called faith healers. Only when Christ returns will He destroy death (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). Until then, sickness and death are a part of God's plan and being a Christian does not remove that curse on earth. In heaven the curse will be gone, but not while we live on earth (Revelation 21:3-4; 22:1-5).

**Conclusion**

There are three reasons why we believe and teach that miracles like those in the New Testament are no longer available to the church today. We would be happy to defend these truths from God's word in public discussion, if there is a suitable opponent who wishes to challenge them.

**First, the need for miracles has ceased.** As mentioned before, miracles of healing served to confirm the revelation of God's message (Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3). In Hebrews 2:3-4 this point is made clear, speaking of the "great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 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." With the perfect will of God revealed and confirmed by first century miracles, the need for such miraculous powers to reveal and confirm God's word came to an end (James 1:25; Jude 3; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). God gave His purpose for giving miraculous power. Dare we question His revealed will and try to continue something He desired to cease?

**Second, the means of obtaining miraculous gifts has ceased.** Only the

apostles of Christ had the power to lay their hands on others and confer the ability to work miracles. The evangelist Philip had the apostles lay hands on him in Acts 6:5-6, and he went to Samaria and worked miracles of healing (Acts 8:5-7). However, Philip could not pass on this power to work miracles to others. Only the apostles could do so. This was a sign of an apostle of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:12). Since other Christians had different spiritual gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, the act of passing on the Holy Spirit's power to others was the sign which only an apostle possessed. Carefully read Acts 8:14-20 and note that the apostles Peter and John had to go from Jerusalem to Samaria, lay hands on the new disciples, then they received the Holy Spirit. Verse 18 notes that Simon "saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given....," and he wanted that power. However, that power is never stated of anyone other than the apostles. Since there are no apostles living today, **there is no possibility of anyone having the miraculous powers of healing!** When the last apostle died, and the last one on whom an apostle had laid hands died, the ability of men to work miracles ceased. According to the Scriptures, that matter is settled, despite all the claims to the contrary.

**Third, modern miracles rest on claims rather than on demonstration!** The Scriptures we have shown on the nature and character of New Testament miracles are proof that such no longer exist today. **No one, repeat, NO ONE, is performing any miracles identical to those described in the New Testament!** If they are, where are they? Are those who make the "claim" ready to prove such? The apostle Paul said that his preaching was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4) and "in power and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Who will make such a claim today and **pledge to back it up with the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit?** I venture to say that **no one will answer such a challenge publicly.**

Since we have in our possession the fullness of God's divinely inspired word, confirmed once for all time, we have no need of further revelation (John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19). Neither do we need another confirmation of the already confirmed word, anymore than we need

Christ to come back and **again** die on the cross. As Christ's work on the cross was completed once and for all (Hebrews 9:28; 10:10), so God's word is completely revealed and confirmed once and for all (Galatians 3:15; Hebrews 2:3-4). Once the perfect and completed word of God had come, miraculous works were to cease (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). Likewise, once the unity of the faith had arrived (the faith once for all delivered which alone brings religious unity), then the age of miracles was intended to end (Ephesians 4:11-15). Today we look to God to hear and answer our prayers for healing, not miraculously, but through divine providence of His working. In this way God still performs His work among men, even though He chooses not to work miracles through men as He once did. If you disagree, prove otherwise by the Scripture and your power.

*Some people's weakness is the strongest thing about them.*

*All the available evidence goes to show that the reverse of evolution is true. For instance, we have all seen men making monkeys of themselves, but no one ever saw a monkey making a man of himself.*

*Excuses fool no one but the person who makes them.*

## "Let's Think About It"

by Jeff Jarrett

It is always interesting to notice that no matter how long this world goes on, people don't seem to change much. Sure, we change some things on the surface. Our culture, clothes, technological advances, etc., are changing by the day. But at the heart of it all, people still face the same problems with the same solutions and the same obstacles as those of a thousand years ago. And many times people still use the same stubborn, worn out excuses for failing to follow God.

Solomon, in all his wisdom, spoke of an ageless problem in Ecclesiastes 11:4; "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." He paints a word picture of a farmer walking out his door early one morning in the spring to scatter seed on the prepared ground. As he looks at the weather, he says to himself, "It might be too windy today. If the wind blows, my seed might be blown away. I guess I'll just relax and wait for a better day." Then, there is the other farmer who somehow gets his crop planted, but at harvest time he looks at the clouds and thinks, "Well, if I start harvesting I'll just have to stop when it rains. Maybe I'll wait until another day." Needless to say, such an attitude dooms these farmers to failure. If one only looks for problems and possible obstacles to any work, he is destined to fail.

So, do we ever see this problem today? To ask is to answer. It seems to reveal itself any time work must be done, problems must be solved, or changes must be made. In dealing with personal spiritual problems, the need to obey the Gospel, or the need to be restored, many regard the wind and the clouds. One can always find an excuse to wait "just a little longer," but often "a little longer" ends up being a lifetime.

Regarding the work of the church, more often than not, we find ourselves looking at the wind and clouds. So often, good works, needed changes, and golden opportunities pass us by because we allow the idea of potential problems and obstacles to upstage the supreme benefits which come from timely efforts and well-planned works. If you regard the wind and clouds, there is never a "perfect time." But life teaches us that any worthwhile effort has its problems, its challenges, and unfortunately, its nay sayers. The Bible teaches us that the

spiritually strong rise above the problems, put their trust in God and put their hearts and hands into the work before them (1 Cor. 15:58).

Where is *your* focus? Is it upon the hindrances or is it upon the great good we can do in this life? Remember the wisdom of Solomon!

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## Pragmatism: Worldly Conformity In A New Dress

by Dennis Gullede

God has always demanded that his people be separate and distinct from the world. The fact that Israel was to be "a light of the Gentiles" required them to be "different" (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). They were commanded, "separate yourselves from the people of the land" (Ezra 10:11), and in earlier generations were required to separate themselves from Egyptian and Canannite cultures and ways (Leviticus 18:3). That principle of distinction holds true for the New Testament Christian today (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9).

The Lord's church of today faces a mounting threat to surrender its doctrinal distinctiveness for the preferred mode of pragmatism for growing churches. "Pragmatism" is very simple. It is the philosophy of what works. If something brings the desired result, it is "good." If ideas do not prove workable, they are thrown out. It is a belief that ultimately defines truth as that which is useful in reaching a desired objective. Let us say, for example, that that goal is to increase attendance figures in the local church. Pragmatism says that whatever works in reaching the goal of increased attendance is a desirable option even if you have to skirt around a "thus saith the Lord" to introduce it.

Take for example the resurrected controversy surrounding the use of instrumental music in the worship services of the Lord's church. The current push for it has less to do with a respect for the Scriptures, and more to do with a move to fix declining attendance figures. The question, "How are we going to keep our young people interested if we do not spice up the worship services?", becomes more authoritative to the pragmatist than do Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. The same rule applies to the current demand

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for an expanded role for women in the work and worship of the church. The argument rages: "If we don't give our women more authority, we're going to lose them!" The Scriptures are ignored; most notably Paul's dictates in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Again, a growing disdain for Bible preaching is rapidly taking hold of many in churches of Christ today. The pure and simple apostolic proclamation of heaven's priceless pearls is thought to be too outdated a method to attract and hold the masses, and is therefore being trounced by "progressive" brethren in favor of new and innovative side-show tactics designed to please and invigorate. It seems that just about everything is in fashion in the church today, except "book, chapter and verse" preaching.

Pragmatists consider the doctrine of Christ a secondary matter. These people consider Bible doctrine to be loose and adaptable, and certainly not something worth fighting for. Watch out for pragmatism! You will not hear its name, but you will see its fruits, and you will know this tree by its fruits!

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## DECEIVED!

A man is **DECEIVED** if he is a hearer and not a doer of the word (James 1:22).

A man is **DECEIVED** if he says he has no sin (1 John 1:8).

A man is **DECEIVED** when he thinks himself to be something when he is nothing (Gal. 6:3).

A man is **DECEIVED** when he thinks himself to be wise with the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 3:18).

A man is **DECEIVED** by seeming to be religious when an unbridled tongue reveals his true condition (James 1:26).

A man is **DECEIVED** if he thinks he will sow and not reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7).

A man is **DECEIVED** if he thinks the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9).

*Keeping a cool head may prevent your rushing into a place where you will get cold feet.*

*If you open your mouth, do it wisely.*

## "It's Not About People, It's About Conduct"

by Tracy Dugger

Oftentimes those who oppose such things as homosexuality or sex outside marriage are "tagged" as bigoted, prejudiced, haters, and judgemental. These titles are intended to cloud the real issue at hand.

God loves the homosexual, fornicator, idolater, etc... (John 3:16). What the Almighty disapproves of is their activity (1 Cor. 5:9-10). Likewise, as followers of God, we love the individual, but hate the sin (Romans 12:9). For example, our willingness to oppose homosexuality in our society does not originate in animosity against one's person; we oppose homosexuality on the basis of behavior (which carry spiritual consequences - Romans 6:23). In other words, **"It's not about people, it's about conduct."**

We are opposed to so many things in our day and time because of the detriment to people. The decadence of our moral values is evident in every corner of our country. Until conduct is changed and behavior reformed, no end is in sight.

The words of the Spirit through Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 seem especially fitting at this point: ***"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."*** These Corinthians had changed their conduct and lifestyle. Such reformation obviously contributes to the success of a people for Solomon wrote: ***"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"*** (Proverbs 14:34). We love everyone who lives in our great nation, but at the same time we want them to see that much of their conduct is leading us to destruction.

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*There is a lot to be said about talking to yourself and then there is a great deal to be said about talking to God.*

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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