

## **Believing God for a Miracle**

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God's Empowering Presence

John 14:11-12

For those of you haven't been here, I have recently been doing a series of teachings on the supernatural and, in particular, on the Holy Spirit. I have made several assertions throughout this series; one of which is that many people know very little about the Holy Spirit in today's church. Many people are only doctrinally Trinitarian. We have very little relationship to the Spirit and we really don't understand his work in our lives. What it means to be empowered by the Spirit.

Now we have seen that the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit's presence can be felt. People in the Bible know when the Holy Spirit comes. You can feel God's love poured out in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is not meant to be a mysterious force that we abstractly believe in as a doctrinal add-on, but rather the Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Trinity, whose presence can be known and felt.

Well, as we have been talking about the power of God, what I want to do this morning is discuss our part in bringing the power of God into this world. We do have a role in bringing God's power into our world. Our part, our role, in bringing the power of the Spirit boils down to one word: Faith. There is one requirement, biblically, for bringing God's power into this world—faith. Believing.

You say, "Rich, where in the Bible do we read that the great requirement for seeing God's miracles, God's power, seeing the supernatural from God released into this world turns on believing?" Again, I want to remind you while we're talking in this series about experiences and the supernatural: the source of what we believe is the Bible. I want this church to constantly say, "Show it to me in the Bible if you want me to believe it!"

If you have a Bible this morning, I would like you to turn to John 14 and we are going to look at verses 11 and 12. Jesus says to the disciples, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or else believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

Now, there is a great controversy regarding what Jesus is referring to when he speaks of people being able to do what he has been doing and doing even greater things than he has been doing. Actually the New International Version translation that I am reading from this morning is a little weak in verse 12 because the better translation would read something like this: "I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do the works I have been doing, he will do even greater things than these." He will do the works that I have been doing.

Now what is Jesus referring to when he says if we have faith we will do the works he was doing? Many commentators, particularly very conservative evangelical commentators will say that the works that Jesus talks about is certainly not referring to miracles. The greater works that Jesus promises to

those who have faith in him will be greater works of evangelism, spreading the gospel.

These commentators will say, look at Billy Graham, for example. Billy Graham has spoken the gospel to a thousand times more people than Jesus did during his life and what with satellite technology and remote feeds from distant locations, and all of the technological wonders of the 20th century—why we are able to do greater works than Jesus in the sense that we can affect more people for God than someone living in Christ's day could affect.

Now, I think that it is a wonderful thing that we do have technology today to spread the gospel. I think that satellite technology and some of the stuff that is being used in communicating the good news about God sending his Son to pay the price for our sins, the fact that that message can be beamed out all over the world is an incredible gift. But I don't think that when Jesus says that if we believe in him we will do the works he has been doing and even greater things than these is referring to satellite technology, that the greater works is referring to a greater number of people being affected by evangelism.

I believe that it can be clearly established from the gospel of John that the works Jesus' disciples will do and the even greater things that they will do than Jesus is almost certainly referring to miracles. When Jesus says here, "I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do the works [not what is in the New International Version, but the works] that I have been doing" he is not referring to his preaching, in general. He is not referring to his evangelism, in general. He is referring in a restricted way, to miracles, to healings and unusual works of power.

You say, "Well, Rich, how do you know that your interpretation is right and the conservative evangelical interpretation, wanting to wash out miracles from John 14:12, is wrong?"

Well, the way that we interpret a phrase is always in context. That is the best way to interpret the Bible. Always read words in context and always examine how the author uses certain words and phrases. This little phrase "the works" is a translation of the Greek word "erga". Erga is used many times in the gospel of John. You know, one of the wonders of modern technology is that with a punch of a button, you can come up on the computer with a complete list of all of the usages of a word in a book or in the whole New Testament or in the whole Bible. And so, I am becoming a cyber-punk recently. I just got a little computer and I have been playing around with it. I looked up all of the references in the book of John to the Greek word "erga," the works.

Do you know what? Every time John uses the phrase "the works" he is always, always referring to miracles. In fact, the New International Version translators are so sure that John is referring to miracles they actually translate the word "miracles." For example, the word "erga" is used in verse 11 when Jesus says, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles..." [and actually it is the "erga" which would translate "the works" but here it is translated the miracles.].

If you are taking notes, you may want to write down John 10:32 where it says, "Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great [and it should read "works," but here the New International Version translates it] miracles from the Father for which of these do you stone me?"

In John 10:38 is the same Greek word “erga.” “But if I do it even though you do not believe in me, believe in the works [the miracles] that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

And then in John 15:24, we also read the same word “erga” being used and being translated by the commentators as “miracles.” “If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these works [these miracles, these erga] and yet they have hated both me and my Father.”

My point, friends, is real simple. Jesus makes the most audacious promise of any promise made to us in the New Testament. I am not sure I know of a more audacious, more mind-boggling promise, one that is sure to absolutely render us speechless if we really let the full impact of it work into our lives, Jesus says, “If we believe in him, we will do the same miracles that he did and even greater miracles than the ones he did.” Because of the audacious nature of the promise, because it seems so far from fulfillment and far from anything that we could ever be able to do, evangelical commentators have sought various ways to water it down. Surely, Jesus couldn’t have meant that. Surely, he couldn’t have said that. Surely, we must have misinterpreted it. Misheard him.

But Jesus did say it.

And I will tell you what, friends. Jesus said a lot of things that stretch our minds. Jesus said that if we believe in him, though we die, yet we will rise from the dead. Do you believe that? Jesus said that if we believe in him, we need never be anxious about what we will eat or wear. God will provide for us. Do you believe that? Jesus said that if we believe in him, we would have abundant life. Do you believe that?

Jesus says here in John 14:12, and if I had the time I could run you through the book of John and how John uses the word “erga” the works, the miracles, and prove to you he is talking to you about miracles here. Jesus says in the most unambiguous, audacious terms, “If you believe in me, you will do the miracles I have been doing and you will do even greater things than these.”

What is the great requirement for doing the works, the miracles of Jesus such as healings? What is the great requirement for doing healings, power ministry, seeing miracles in our lives? Believing. I want tackle the issue of believing God for a miracle today. We will search out the meaning of believing and we will try to learn together what we must do as individuals and as a church to see the power of God released in our midst.

Let’s pray.

Now, as we look at the subject of believing God for a miracle, we first must take a look at the different ways that faith is used in the Bible. See, there is what is called “the faith”, which is talking about the great apostolic deposit found in the New Testament summed up in the great creeds of the church. And Jude tells us in Jude 3, “Dear friends, although I was eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt that I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Now, many people in the church today, many Christians, hold on to the faith in the sense that their doctrine is orthodox. They believe in what the apostles taught regarding the Trinity. They believe in the deity of Christ. They believe that the only way to be saved is by grace alone through faith alone. They

believe in Christ's atonement. They believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus. They believe in "the faith."

Now there is a second kind of faith I see referred to in the New Testament. What I would call saving faith which is more of a trust. It is not just being orthodox in your notions, but actually relying on or trusting in God's provision made for your sins at the cross. A person who has saving faith is referred to in John 3:16 where Jesus says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him will not perish", whoever trusts that God has made the provision for your sin by the cross of Christ. You believe that. You trust God's provision for your sins.

You know, there is a kind of faith, though, that goes beyond saving faith. The kind of faith referred to here in John 14:12 as wonder-working faith, miracle working faith, a faith that not only believes in God's past provision, not only believes in the provision of God at the cross 2000 years ago, but believes in God's provision of a miracle today when we need a breakthrough from God. There are many many people who certainly do believe in God's past provision at the cross, in history, but do not have the faith to believe in God's present provision of a miracle in their lives when they need a break-through. Just because you have saving faith doesn't mean you have miracle working faith.

You know, friends, I think that many of us do not expect very much from God presently and so we are never disappointed. You know, let me put it a little differently. I think that a lot of us treat God the way we treat disappointing people in our lives. You don't expect much from God and so you are not hurt much by God's failure to meet your expectations. If you don't expect much, you are not going to be disappointed very much. There is a very helpful psychological device that most of us have learned to keep ourselves from getting hurt. And that is you lower your expectations. Some people never learn that.

Imagine a situation in which every time your mom spoke to you, she said something hurtful. What if every time you spoke with your mother you went in expecting a level 2 response? What if you decided that Mom just will never give you the compliments or commendation that you want? What should you do? Lower your expectations. Mom is just going to treat you at a level 2. She will never give you a level 10 response. She will always be level 2.

Well, what we do with other people, we tend to do with God. If we get hurt a few times or go through trials, we start treating God as if he were a level 2 person. The reason why some of you have not recently been disappointed by God is that you have stopped expecting much from God or you never expected much. You haven't been asking great things from God.

See, some of you might point to a stability in your Christian life. You say you don't understand why some Christians are up and down. You are always even. Well, friends, your stability may be because you rarely ask God for anything miraculous. You don't have the experience of the Psalmist, of the highs and lows, but it is only because you relate to God not as level 10, but as level 2.

You say, "Rich, why is faith so important in bringing about miracles in this world? In our lives, in our marriages, with our kids, and in particular I am talking about in healings, why is faith so important?" Because faith, first of all, pleases God. When you look at God as a level 10 person who could do level 10 things, you please God. It should be obvious to us why faith pleases God as Hebrews

11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." With faith you please God. It should be obvious to us why faith pleases God. All of us are pleased when people trust us. And all of us find it really difficult to not be trusted.

Ever hear a teenager talk with their parents and the upset and the outrage when parents will say, "don't do this." And the teenager will say, "You don't trust me." To not trust a person is to insult their personality.

Now, of course, trust must be earned. But when we don't trust someone, after they have earned our trust, we are insulting them. To not believe in God and to not believe in God for miracles insults God. Faith pleases God. It is about the only thing you can do for God, is believe in him.

And faith releases God's power in this world. Faith releases God to do what he wants to do in this world. Turn with me to Mark 6. I want you to see this. Faith is a release point for God. It not only pleases God, but releases God.

In Mark 6 Jesus was in his home town in Nazareth accompanied by his disciples. "When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were amazed. Where did this man get these things, they asked? What's this wisdom that has been given him that he even does miracles? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brothers of James, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us? And they took offense to him."

Jesus said to them, "Only in his own hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.' He could not do miracles there except lay hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith."

The power of God was held back in Nazareth, why? The text tells us that it is because of their lack of faith. Faith releases God to do what he wants to do. Have you noticed how often in performing a healing Jesus commends a person for believing in him? For example, in Matthew 8 when the Roman centurion is asking Jesus for a healing and clearly understands the nature of Jesus' authority. In Matthew 8:10 it reads: "When Jesus heard this, when he heard the centurion's words, he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I will you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.'"

And then in verse 13 Jesus speaks to the centurion and says, "Go, it will be done just as you believed it would. And his servant was healed that very hour."

Faith releases God to do what he wants to do. This is such a fundamental principle of the Christian life. I believe we don't teach on the importance of faith enough. But understand that in the way that God had set up the universe, and the way that God has set up the kingdom of God, he has determined to work together with us in accomplishing his purposes. God is highly relational. And he has decided to not do everything by himself. He has designed life to be a cooperation between himself and us. Oh, he could instantly feed us by himself, by just "poof!" and our stomachs are filled. Poof! – no cholesterol and no calories. But he has us ask him for our daily bread and then we have to labor in the world to earn money and then we have to buy the food. And yet all the while we know that we would have no food if God didn't send the rain; if God didn't bring the sun up each day and so on. All the while we know that our food comes

from God and yet we have to labor for our food. God has designed life to be a cooperation between us and God.

And God has designed the spread of the kingdom to be a cooperative effort between us and God. Oh, he could just instantly save people apart from anyone speaking the gospel message to a person, but he has chosen to work through ordinary people like you and me. As we share the gospel, God uses us, works through us, to spread the kingdom.

God has not chosen to do miracles all by himself, but to have miracles released into this world through people who believe. It is all part of God's relational design to work not around us or in spite of us or without us, but through us. Faith releases the power of God. In that way, faith is very much like the clutch in a car. You know, as you release the clutch, the power of the engine kicks in.

Now, if you are driving a sports car, as you release the clutch and the engine engages, you never hear someone say, "Wow! Listen to that clutch. Man! That is an incredible clutch." What you hear people say is, "Wow, check out those five liters under the hood; that is a powerful engine."

When faith releases the work of God to do miracles in the world, we never say, "Oh, you man of ever increasing faith, aren't you something?" We say, "Oh, what a wonder working God we serve."

But I tell you if you don't release the clutch, the power of the engine never moves the car forward. If we don't exercise faith, the Kingdom doesn't move forward. We don't glorify our faith, we glorify God. And yet, it is so amazing to me that God's sovereignty is great enough to work in cooperation with us. That God has chosen to restrict himself to our prayers, to our faith, to what we choose to release in the world.

Let me ask you something: How much of God are you releasing in your world? How much of God is flowing through your life? God's kindness, God's generosity, God's love for people? How much of God is flowing through your life? You know, I think in my own case that so often the pipe that would run the water through is so clogged up with unbelief that very little of God is released in the world.

Faith not only pleases God and it not only releases God, but it also responds to God. Listen, in all my talk about faith today, I never want to give you the least indication that faith somehow takes the initiative or control away from God. Faith releases God, yet faith is always responding to God's lead and God's initiative. God is always the one in control. God is always the leader.

You know, I have often described Christianity as being like a dance. Unlike Hinduism, we don't believe in a God who just dances alone. You know Hindus believe in a dancing God and that he dances alone and that people are just sort of absorbed up in God. The pagans dance alone and they don't believe in God. They believe in magic. They control everything. Christians believe in a two-party dance. Yes, but God is the leader of the dance and we follow God. As Paul says in Galatians 5: "Make sure that you keep in step with the Holy Spirit." God is the leader of the dance and he takes the initiative.

Jesus put it real plainly to us in John 5: "I tell you the truth. The Son can do nothing by himself. He can only do what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, that the Son also does."

Faith responds to God. To God's word and God's character and what God is saying and what God is doing. And we just follow along. Where, I think, the faith movement, as it is called, the positive confession movement, the faith walk people have gotten off in their focus on faith is this. There is this idea that somehow because we see faith as the requirement for doing miracles, that faith means that God has turned control of things over to us. God has said, "Well, if you have enough faith, I am going to turn the control of the universe over to you. Here, I will slid over to the passenger side and you drive." Faith walk people will often talk about writing your own ticket with God.

Friends, God never turns control over to us. He is always the Almighty, always the Sovereign, always the Lord. Yes, faith releases God, but it releases God to do what God wants to do, not what we want to do. Can you imagine what kind of monster you would be or I would be if God gave me the power or you the power to do what you or I wanted to do? The power is always in God and is never entrusted to people. The power is released through us. So we don't boast about ourselves. We don't write tickets with God by faith and we don't boast about our own faith.

I love the way that John Wimber describes the story of the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday. In the Bible there is a story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday. And he is riding in and he tells the story from the perspective of the donkey. As the donkey is coming through in Jerusalem and people are throwing flowers in front of him and throwing their clothes down and bowing in the streets, the donkey feels so good. He says, "Wow. I didn't realize they knew who I was. I didn't realize that everyone here was aware of my presence." The donkey just forgot who was riding on his back, that's all.

In the doing of miracles, we must remember that it is not us, but who is riding on our back that makes a difference. Whose hand, in other words, is on our lives? Whose favor is coming through?

Faith pleases God. It releases God. But it always responds to God's initiative.

Now, today as I am talking about believing God for a miracle and I believe there are some foundational matters that need to be placed in a person's life if they are to see God's power released through them, some things that you must build on.

The first thing I think we need to build on is knowing who we are. Before you can believe that God is going to do something great through you, you must believe what God has said to you about your acceptability. I talked about this in terms of an umbrella that keeps us from receiving the rain of the Spirit, the falling of the Spirit. I believe that a great restriction in seeing the miraculous power of God is that many of us do not believe that we are acceptable to God. And because we don't believe that we are acceptable to God, that we are not worthy, we cannot imagine that God would want to do anything through someone like us.

A foundational principle for seeing a miracle is really knowing who you are in Christ. If you don't know who you are, you don't know what God can do through you. One of the things that I have done with people in the past who struggle with their identity in Christ is that I take them over to Ephesians 1. Turn there with me. Let's imagine that we are dealing with a woman named Alice who just does not believe that she is good enough for God to ever work a miracle

through. Oh maybe some great saint God could use, but she says, no way. The first thing that we want to deal with is her understanding of her identity in Christ.

So we look at Ephesians 1 and what I would say to Alice is “Alice, every time a blessing is given to the church, to the believer, I want you to insert your name all through Ephesians 1 beginning in verse 2: “Grace and peace to Alice [You insert your name] from God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed Alice in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose Alice in him [you put your name in there—he chose you in him] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined Alice to be adopted as his daughter through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure. To the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given Alice in the one he loves. In him, Alice has received redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on Alice with all wisdom and he made known to Alice the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ. In him, Alice was chosen and in order that Alice who was the first to hope in Christ might be for the praise of his glory. And Alice was also included in Christ when Alice heard the word of truth...Having believed, Alice was marked with a seal...” And on and on.

To gain a sense of your identity, a sense of your acceptability to be the kind of a human being that God could work through you need to know who you are. And who you are is one who has been predestined, one who has been designed for the praise of God’s glory, one who has been accepted fully by God in the beloved, one who is forgiven, one whom God has lavished with spiritual riches. Many of us need to rethink the way we think to receive the blessing of the Father on our lives.

We not only need as a foundational principle to know who we are, we also need to know what our commission is. If you are to work miracles, you have to know that miracles and particularly healings are part of your job description as a Christian. That this is part of what God has for you. And the way you would know what God has for you is to look it up in his word. What has God told you to do? The only foundation for faith is what has God said in his written word? And so we turn to Matthew 28—not only who you are but what you have been ordered to do, what you have been commissioned to do. Matthew 28:16-20, here is the Great Commission passage:

Jesus says, “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been give to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

What were the apostles to go and do? They were to go and make disciples of all nations, followers of Jesus everywhere—down to followers of Jesus in Columbus, Ohio in October 1995. And what does it mean to be a follower of Christ in Columbus, Ohio in 1995? It means, first of all, if you are a follower of Christ, you ought to be baptized in water. He says, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Every follower of Christ ought to be



baptized in water. And if you haven't been baptized since you came to faith in Christ, you need to sign up for our Believers' Baptism. We have tapes on the subject. You can pick up a tape and a paper on the subject at our bookstore.

Beyond that, being a follower of Christ also means that we have been taught to obey everything that was commanded to the apostles. You obey everything Jesus said to the apostles. What did Jesus tell the apostles to do?

Let's look back to Matthew 10. He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease. And then he gave them instructions. "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans." Well, after his resurrection, he reversed that command. We know that is no longer applicable. We do go among the Gentiles after the resurrection. That is what he told the disciples to do. But here are the commands he told them to follow: "As you go preach this message. The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. For freely you have received, freely give."

When you consider what it means to be a disciple and the everything that was said to the apostles that we are to do in Matthew 28, part of that everything is praying for the sick. The reason why many Christians do not see miracles working in their lives is that they do not know that they are ordered to do them. To pray for them. They don't know it. They think that some of the commands given to the disciples don't apply. But teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you, everything is a big word. Everything usually means everything. It means everything. All of it. Unless Jesus, at a future point, says, "Well now I reverse that" as he does with going to the Gentiles, he reversed that, but he never reversed praying for the sick. You are commanded as part of your discipleship to pray for the sick.

Now, in a certain way that lets us off the hook. We are not commanded as disciples to look good while we pray for the sick. A great inhibitor in praying for the sick is to try to look good while you do it. We don't look good because many of the sick that we pray for don't get well. And we don't know what God is doing. We are not that sensitive to the lead of God yet. We don't have that much anointing. We don't have Jesus on our backs riding us the way he needs to ride us in order to bring about the glory that he wants to bring about. We are to pray for the sick. Our commission is not to look good while we do it.

Some of us are inhibited in praying for the sick because if we don't know what we are doing, God is going to have his reputation sullied in the process. Friends, God is very big. God can take care of his reputation. You go ahead and pray for the sick and you let God worry about looking good. He will take care of that, trust me, he will. In the same way that you go ahead and share your faith and try to do the best job possible, learn as much as you can, pray as much as you can, but let God worry about how he comes off using someone like you.

You are not called to look good. Nor is your commission to have to succeed. I am so glad that God didn't say, "And Rich every time you pray for the sick, you must succeed." Every time you preach the gospel, you must succeed. That is not the commission. Again, I will leave that responsibility for success up to God. My commission is to preach the gospel and to pray for the sick.

We have to know our identity. We have to know our commission—what the command is. And if you are going to do a miracle, and let's speak of it in

terms of healing, you must know what God's will is regarding miracles in general and healing in particular. So many people when they are praying for the sick are robbed of the ability to release God because they say, "But I don't know if it is God's will to heal this person who is standing in front of me. I don't know what God's will is." Is it God's will to heal this blind person? Is it God's will to heal this deaf person? Is it God's will to heal this cancer?

Let me give you the answer for those questions. Is it God's will to heal this blind person? The answer is yes. Is it God's will to heal this deaf person? The answer is yes. Is it God's will to heal this person with cancer? The answer is yes.

You say, "How are you so sure?"

Well, we know that in heaven there will be no deaf people. Deaf people will hear, won't they? We know that in heaven there won't be any blind people. Blind people will see. We know that in heaven there is not going to be any cancer. Cancer will be removed.

You say, "Rich that is just playing games."

No, no it is not playing games. You need to know what the will of God is. What the heart of God is regarding sickness. The heart of God regarding sickness is to remove sickness from this universe. Sickness is not something that God is going to tolerate forever. His heart and will is to remove it. The issue is not will God remove the illness, he will. He wants to and he will. The issue is only the timing. Will he do it in the future or will he do it now?

I want you to see something. Flip with me to Hebrews 6. Why we can expect God to work now. In speaking of people who are making professions of faith, in the book of Hebrews, the writer says that it is impossible for those who have been enlightened to have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age. You know, people who make professions of faith begin to taste the powers of the coming age. The power of the coming age is that there is healing for every disease. But that coming age has broken into this age through Jesus. When Jesus went around preaching, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" what he was saying is the powers that you will see fully in the coming age in heaven, I am bringing them into this world right now in my person because I am the Messianic King."

It never is the case that you have to wonder what God's will is regarding sickness. The only thing you have to wonder is what God's timing is. And the way we approach God is to say to God, "God, since it is your will, not if it is your will, since it is your will to heal, may we see it now and not then? May we see it today and not tomorrow? May we see it this year and not 20 years down line? Since it is your will to heal, will you do it now on earth and not just in heaven?"

You know, even when you run through everything that I have been talking about, friends, you get a sense of who you are and you become clear that God wants you to pray for the sick, and you begin to see the promise of God that you will begin to do greater works than these, and you get to know the will of God and that it is timing, faith for miracles is a fight. In fact, the whole New Testament tells us that faith is a fight. It is a struggle. The world, the flesh and the devil constantly oppose us. It is hard. And you see in Hebrews 11 the various warriors that had to fight their way through. Faith is a fight.

One of the things that you are going to have to fight through is a fatalism that has infected the whole world, but has infected the church world in sort of what I call a distorted Calvinism for those of you who are theologically minded. A fatalism that says, "What can we do? It is all up to God." It sounds real super spiritual. It sounds very very spiritual, very religious to say, "Well, you know, if God wants to heal, he can heal. If God wants to deliver someone of cancer, he can deliver them from cancer. If God wants to save this marriage, he will do it in his time. Let's not bother God with really seeking him about it." A fatalism. There used to be in the 1950's a song by I think it was Doris Day or someone that went "Que sera sera, whatever will be will be." You know the idea that whatever God ordains, that is the way it is and we have nothing to say about it.

You know, I described at the front end of this talk that God intends to work his will and his power in this world through us. He wants a relationship. It is not the case that God will do whatever he is going to do despite you, apart from you, without you. He wants to work through you. It is a two-party deal in Christianity. The kingdom of God extends from God through us. And you know what fatalism is like? It reminds me of a pitcher who is holding the ball and decides not to throw it and then blames the catcher for not catching it. Well, why didn't the catcher catch the ball? Why didn't the catcher run up and grab the ball? The catcher is simply waiting for you to throw the ball. God is simply waiting, I believe, for people to release his presence in the world through faith, for these release points all over the world, for the clutch to be let out all over the world, for his powers to be made known through faith.

And fatalism, friends, this notion that God is going to do whatever he is going to do is simply false. That is a faith killer. And you know another faith killer is not understanding that believing in God is a choice. Friends, the call to faith is not addressed to your intellect. Nor is it addressed to your emotions. It is addressed to your will.

Let me read to you a little verse from John 7:17. Jesus says, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or if I speak on my own. If anyone's will is to do God's will, then you will know."

You know, one of the fights of faith is when you are seeking God for a miracle, very often you don't understand how a situation could possibly work out, how a break-through can be achieved. And many people stumble at this point and say, "Well, if I can't understand how this break-through can be achieved, then I don't have the faith to release a miracle." Faith is not addressed to your intellect. Faith is addressed to your will. Will you choose to believe in God even if you can't understand how it will work out?

The great Augustine understood this principle. Augustine said 1600 years ago, "Understanding is the reward of faith." We don't seek to understand in order to believe we believe in order to understand. Many people want to see, "Well, God, how could you heal cancer instantaneously when someone is dying? I don't understand it, therefore, I can't believe it." No we choose to believe that it is God's will, the only issue is timing. I choose to believe that God could do it right now. I don't understand. I will understand later. Faith is addressed to the will.

You know, when you choose to follow God, you get the enlightenment later. You do. From the outside you can't figure it out at all. Oh, there is enough

evidence in terms of fulfilled prophecies in the Bible to put your trust in Christ. There is enough evidence in terms of studying and thinking through the resurrection and how the resurrection could be the only explanation for where Jesus' body went. There is enough evidence in terms of people's changed lives all around this church to form a foundation for a reasonable step of faith, but until you choose to take that step of faith, you won't really understand Christianity.

The illustration I love is of standing outside a cathedral. And you can see from the outside that there are stained glass windows on that cathedral. You can examine it from the outside and look at it and you can get some sense that the stained glass window is colored glass, but it looks pretty gray from the outside. Until you choose to step into the cathedral, you will never see the beautiful picture inside. When you step in, you will see it all. Only from the inside will you see it. Faith is addressed to the choice, to the will. It is not addressed to your ability to understand. Understanding in the Christian life comes after choosing to believe.

Faith is also not addressed to your emotions. Very often when you go to pray for someone and you are praying for a miracle, or a break-through, your feelings or emotions will not feel like faith. You will be afraid. There is not a whole lot you can do about your feelings. Not a whole lot. Anxious situations make you feel anxious. But you can choose to believe despite your anxious feelings. You can choose to believe despite the pressure you are under. You can choose to believe despite your depression. You can choose to believe despite whatever feelings you have to the contrary. Don't battle with your feelings when you are praying. Don't get distracted by your feelings and don't get distracted by your intellect. Choose to believe based on who you are in Christ, what your commission is in Christ and what you know God's will to be.

Let me finish with this thought. Faith is absorbed with Jesus. It just concerns itself and absorbs itself with Christ. It is not about us. Or about us being men or women of ever-increasing faith. It is about who is on our backs. It is about Christ. The author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. He is the beginning point of our faith and he is the end. He is the alpha and the omega. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus."

And then in verse 3, the author goes on to say, "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

You will never grow your faith by considering your faith. As you consider your faith, it will feel to you tissue thin. You grow your faith by considering him. Look at how wonderful Jesus is. Look at how he relates to the sick. Consider how Jesus related when someone cried out to him. Consider him. Fix your eyes on him.