

Now Concerning Spiritual Things
an historical account of one man's walk with God

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SUMMON THE PHYSICIAN
PART III

When Jesus was about thirty years of age,¹ after being baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form. God then spoke from heaven the audible declaration, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."² His ministry lasted only three and one-half years, insufficient time today for an undergraduate degree in an accredited University. He came neither as a religionist nor as an economist, politician, scientist or philosopher, even though His teaching impacts every aspect of life and death. He came to seek and save that which was lost.³ Those who followed Him received no graduation certificate or diploma for having completed His course. Neither was there any formal recognition given to those who chose to follow Him. On-the-job training and field demonstrations were his method of instruction. Prior to "graduation," among the star pupils of His class were deserters and doubters.⁴ They saw Him raise the dead, cast out demons, multiply bread and fish to feed thousands, heal the sick, cause the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk and give good news to the poor for which He was crucified. Not even His resurrection and ascension convinced the doubters among His apostles.⁵

¹Luke 3:23. Scripture verses are from the NKJV unless otherwise indicated.

²Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21,22.

³Since the original Adamic sin, mankind has been lost, that is, cut off from God's blessings. His eternal existence therefore will be spent in one of two places: heaven or hell. Hell was not prepared for mankind, it was prepared for Satan and his angels (see Matthew 25:41). Man makes his own decision to go to hell by rejecting God. The choice of whether or not to choose God determines both the kind of life we live on earth and where we will spend eternity. If you haven't made that decision, reach out to Him today, accept Jesus as savior and Lord of your life, to make your calling and election sure. See Romans 10:9 & 10 and 2 Peter 1:10.

⁴Matthew 28:17; Matthew 26:69-75, etc.

⁵Matthew 28:17.

Intellectually it therefore seems strange that the ragtag little band of followers who gathered around Him *suddenly*⁶ became bold, courageous proclaimers of His message, many of whom were martyred for their faith. I know of no way to rationalize such a radical change of mind and heart except for one thing: the sending of the Holy Spirit. Herein lies the secret, for immediately before He ascended, Jesus said to the eleven, "For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now....you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."⁷ It wasn't just the visual perception and the audible manifestations of the Holy Spirit that changed the 120 disciples that morning.⁸ It was the *inward* witness of the Holy Spirit Who (1) bears witness to Jesus, (2) glorifies Jesus and (3) Who manifests (makes known) Jesus to the spirit and heart of the believer.⁹ Until that happens, you believe and

⁶The word *suddenly* is descriptive of the way the Holy Spirit works. That is *one* of His trademarks. The record in Acts 2:2 begins with these words, "And *suddenly* there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind...." That's the way of the Holy Spirit. When the time is right, He acts. Just before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were "endued with power from on high." (See Luke 24:49). That *power* was and is the Holy Spirit. He works today as He did on that Pentecost morning, that is, *suddenly*. In my walk with the Lord for over thirty-three years, the manifestations, leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit have never been predictable. The first time the Holy Spirit spoke to me with a prophetic message was while I was in prayer one morning about thirty-one years ago. It was *suddenly, unexpected* and totally *without emotion*. On one occasion the Holy Spirit said to me, "Expect the unexpected."

⁷See Acts 1:5 & 8.

⁸"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And *suddenly* there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 1:15; 2:1-4).

⁹See John 15:26, John 16:14 and John 14:21.

would *like to know*, (as did honest Thomas,¹⁰ the apostle, for example). After it happens *you know because of the inward witness you have received from the precious Holy Spirit* – and He changes you forever! What happened to the one hundred twenty disciples on that Pentecost morning happened to me and it can happen to you. For it is the Holy Spirit Who baptizes you into the body of Christ and causes this radical change of heart and mind.¹¹

Prior to His departure from the earth, Jesus gave His disciples final verbal instructions to carry His message to the world. These instructions, called the Great Commission, are recorded in the four Gospel accounts and in Luke’s elaboration in Acts.¹² For the purpose of this letter, I would like to examine the Great Commission as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Mark’s Gospel. Although not an apostle, Mark, who was a close associate of the apostle Peter¹³ and a companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey,¹⁴ recorded the Great Commission with these words:

“**15**And He [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

16He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

17And these *signs* will follow those who believe: In My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

18They will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Verses fifteen and sixteen present no particular challenge since both Matthew and Luke confirm similar messages. See footnote #12. But one seldom

hears sermons on verses seventeen and eighteen (the signs verses) because some churches do not believe that these two verses are applicable to the Church today. I would like to review them, since, in my opinion, they are just as much a part of the Great Commission as verses fifteen and sixteen for these reasons: as the text appears, all four verses are a composite part of the same continuous instruction/conversation of Jesus. They were obviously spoken at the same time with no indication anywhere of a time break or a change in setting between any of the four verses. The *signs* Jesus said would follow believers support the gospel message and cannot be limited to the apostolic age any more than the Lord’s Commission to carry the gospel throughout the world can be so limited. My comments will be directed at what I consider to be the “practical” side of the *signs verses* from the point of view of a born-again Spirit filled Christian who has discovered the reality of the Spirit in his everyday walk with God.¹⁵ When you accept baptism of the Holy Spirit, you pass through a veil. Not a visible veil, nonetheless a very real spiritual veil. With the veil gone you begin to *see things in a different light*. Parts of the scripture you formerly had written off become real with understanding imparted by the One who inspired the words initially. The Author is always the best interpreter of what He has written, or inspired, in this case. Jesus said it this way, “But the Helper [Comforter in the KJV and RSV], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, *He will teach you all things*, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”¹⁶

There is no question on what Jesus said. Signs would follow *believers, not just apostles*, to confirm the message. The first sign, casting out demons in Jesus’ Name, does not imply that you should become equipped to have a deliverance ministry, for example. However, it does imply the awareness of, the reality of and the dangers of the demonic spirit-world in which

¹⁰Read John 20:24-29.

¹¹See 1 Corinthians 12:13.

¹²Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8.

¹³See 1 Peter 5:13.

¹⁴See Acts 12:25.

¹⁵In case you disagree with my comments, have patience, the Lord is not through with either of us yet!

¹⁶John 14:26, brackets and italics added. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would *teach us all things. That is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. And that is why one who accepts the complete ministry of the Holy Spirit today, in essence, seems to have the scales removed from his eyes as did the apostle Paul. With the scales removed, you can see.* For the account of the scales being removed from the eyes of Saul of Tarsus (who became the apostle Paul), see Acts 9:18.

we live, and the *believer's authority* in this area. This strikes at the very heart of what Jesus came to do, namely, “destroy the works of the devil.”¹⁷ The Holy Spirit empowers one with this authority.

The second sign, “they will speak with new tongues” is the Spiritual gift about which there has been much misunderstanding. Suffice it to say the gift is valid, is a blessing to the recipient, is the equivalent of the gift of prophecy¹⁸ when coupled with the gift of interpretation and is not a status symbol. Jesus is the status symbol. You can be filled with the Spirit from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet, like a hand fills a glove, and never “speak with new tongues.”¹⁹ Do not feel that you are inferior in any measure because you do not exercise this gift. If you do not understand it, you may see no need for it. But don't forget that it is a gift of the Spirit. His gifts are the very best. Do not speak disparagingly of any Spiritual gift. All nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are given to the body for specific purposes. Where there is freedom in the body to seek and exercise these gifts, blessings flow and the body of the Lord is strengthened. I write from experience and am in a congregation where such freedom exists.

A misunderstanding of the first part of verse eighteen is apparently responsible for the establishment of snake-handling cults. Such cults were evident in the

¹⁷See 1 John 3:8.

¹⁸For the benefit of those of you who are not in a church where the gifts of the Spirit are in operation, prophecy given by the Holy Spirit today can be both forth telling and foretelling. Tongues with interpretation and/or the spiritual gift of prophecy listed in 1 Corinthians 12:10, along with the other spiritual gifts, are for the common good or edification of the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). Forth telling can mean a word of admonition, support and/or encouragement for an individual or individuals who may be able to receive it by faith. Foretelling may be a word concerning a future event. Some prophecies may be both forth telling and foretelling. The rule for prophecy today is that it must line up with scripture and should be subject to being judged by other prophets (see 1 Corinthians 14:32). Procedure for prophetic utterances are given by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:29-32. In my experience, prophecies given to me by the Spirit have been edifying, encouraging, never harsh, judgmental or condemning, were received totally without emotion, and have been both forth telling and foretelling. Up to now none of the prophecies I have received were given in the public assembly but have been given to me privately, with one exception.

¹⁹See 1 Corinthians 12:29, 30. I have experienced a very vivid teaching from the Holy Spirit in a “Joel 2” dream which supports and emphasizes Paul's teaching in these two verses.

United States as late as the 1940's or 1950's, if memory serves me correctly. But this is certainly not what Jesus referred to. The first apostles were neither snake handlers nor poison drinkers. One meaning of this verse becomes apparent when the apostle Paul became shipwreck on the island of Malta (Melita in KJV), while on his way to Italy. Once ashore, while putting some sticks on a camp fire built by the natives, a snake, affected by the heat, sank his fangs into Paul's hand. When this happened, Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire with no ill effect. The natives of Malta witnessed this, recognized the venomous snake and expected Paul to swell up or fall down and die. Since he did neither, realizing that they had seen a miracle, they called Paul a god.²⁰ The conclusion on this scripture is this: When the Holy Spirit directs you to do something, as He did Paul in this case, as you are obedient, you are under the divine protection of the Lord. That is what Paul experienced.

Taking up serpents does not refer to handling snakes in a religious ceremony but casting them off as Paul did without being harmed. The words *take up* in this verse are translated from the Greek word *airo*²¹ and can also mean “remove,” “put away” or “cast away,” as Paul did the snake, for example. See Matthew 14:12; Luke 11:52; 1 Corinthians 5:2 where the Greek word *airo* is translated differently than in Mark 16:18. In a similar way missionaries have testified to God's miraculous protection in hostile areas where they experienced no ill effects from impure food and drink.

The fifth sign listed in the latter part of verse eighteen is the laying on of hands in praying for the sick, about which I have previously written in brief. This sign, like the others, have confirmed the ministries of God's servants in every generation and cannot be limited to the apostolic age any more than the Lord's Commission to preach to every creature can be limited to the past. In case this sign is new to you, do not be afraid of failure. Do not worry about what other people will think or say. Act by faith on what Jesus said and leave the results to Him, for He is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,

²⁰See Acts 28:1-7 for this story of Paul and the snake.

²¹See Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible, Greek Dictionary, Strong's #142, p. 3.

according to the *power* that works in us.”²². All He wants us to do is to *trust Him – take Him at His word – act by faith on what He said -- and leave the results to Him.*

The pastor of a church, with about two million members, took his congregation on an extended camping trip. After a number of supernatural acts of God the group arrived safely at Marah. There they found an ample supply of water which was too bitter to use. The congregation cried out to the pastor who cried out to the Lord, who showed him a tree. At the Lord’s instruction, the pastor cut down the tree, cast it into the waters and the waters were made sweet and useable by another supernatural act of God. At this point God tested the congregation and pastor Moses by saying, “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, *I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.*”²³ The word *heals* in this verse of scripture is translated from the Hebrew word *rapha* (rah-phah), Strong’s #7495, meaning to repair, mend, cure, heal, restore health. The main idea of the verb *rapha* is physical healing. Some have tried to explain away the biblical teaching of divine healing, but it is clear to see that this verse speaks of physical diseases and their divine cure.²⁴

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Malachi wrote, “For I am the Lord [Jehovah], I do not change.”²⁵ Inspired by the same Spirit, in the book of Hebrews the author wrote, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”²⁶ God and Christ have not changed. Divine healing was promised under the law of Moses and under the law of Christ.

It was Jesus who instituted anointing with oil when praying for the sick when He sent out the twelve

(including Judas Iscariot) who “anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.”²⁷

This is the third letter I have written under the heading, “Summon The Physician.” The purpose of all three letters is to reveal that salvation means to *make whole* in body, soul and spirit. While it is true that Jesus came to save us from the consequences of our sins, He also came that we might have an abundant life. It is Satan who is the author of disease and illness, as recorded in these words of Jesus by the Apostle John: “The thief [Satan] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”²⁸ There is a definite relationship between one’s physical well-being and his walk with God. My letters are not written to condemn you or me because we may become physically ill, but to give us hope that there is a better way as prescribed by Jesus. I have much to learn in this area. I feel as though I am a novice. But I know of a certainty that, as I have pointed out in this letter, *physical healing is on both sides of the cross and is part of the Great Commission!* Therefore you and I are entitled to that benefit. Search the scriptures for every health and healing nugget you can find and claim them for yourself. God does not want us ill. He wants us well. Good can come from illness. It may be an opportunity of our drawing closer to God. Should you become ill, in addition to praying for healing based on specific scripture verses, ask the Lord to show you why you became ill, as a learning experience.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, *who heals all your diseases.*”²⁹

“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and *be in health*, just as your soul prospers.”³⁰

....more later, the Lord willing.

²²Ephesians 3:20, bold italics added. The word *power* in this verse of scripture refers to the Holy Spirit.

²³Exodus 15:26, Italicized bold print added.

²⁴For an elaboration on these comments concerning the word *rapha*, see “Word Wealth,” on page 105 of the Spirit Filled Life Bible, Jack W. Hayford, Litt. D., General Editor, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

²⁵Malachi 3:6, brackets inserted.

²⁶Hebrews 13:8.

²⁷Mark 6:13 (b). The same ceremony, anointing with oil in praying for the sick, is also found in James 5:14, 15.

²⁸John 10:10, bracket insertion added.

²⁹Psalms 103:1-3, italicized bold print added.

³⁰John 2, italicized bold print added.