

## **BABIES AND BATHWATER**

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*Please copy it right Prepared by Pastor Bob Hill*

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I've given 35 years of my life in Christ trying to advance the cause of the continuation of all the gifts of the Spirit until the return of the Lord. I'm as pro-miracle, healings, and local church as anybody on planet earth could be. I care deeply for the sick and afflicted. My deep concern motivated me over a year ago to write a book about the need for the healing power of Christ to be regularly manifested in our local churches.

For me, supernatural healing is not some "optional" dimension of kingdom life. Healing is a core element of the Gospel that is to be fully preached (Rom. 15:19-20). I'm glad for any legitimate manifestation of supernatural power that brings relief to human suffering, done anywhere, at any time, by anybody, in the name of, and on behalf of Jesus Christ.

*Rom 15:19-20 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: KJV*

However, I've been alarmed for a very long time about many of the commonly accepted beliefs, value systems, and practices in my "tribe" known as the Charismatic Church. The recent events in Lakeland have created quite a stir in the media. My unease long predates (the author wrote a book last year about this subject) the specifics of events in Lakeland or any individual involved there. However, the events in Lakeland (and elsewhere) can serve as a contemporary frame of reference for my comments.

We worship a perfect Lord who is quite content to allow tares and wheat to grow side by side in His field. He was even content to allow a snake in His garden. That's quite a conundrum. We should not be surprised or shocked then if some of our efforts on His behalf might be less than perfect! Perfectionism kills. Perfectionism always stifles life.

The faultfinder's magnifying glass will inevitably turn upon himself. However, part of the prophetic function is to make crooked things straight (Isa.40:4). That's not perfectionism or faultfinding, though some may interpret it as such.

*Isa 40:4 Every valley shall be lifted and filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked and uneven shall be made straight and level, and the rough places a plain. AMP*

We're all familiar with the adage: "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater." The presence of dirty bathwater means someone is at least trying to clean a baby! That's a good thing! God forbid that I, or anyone, would encumber someone who is at least trying, however imperfectly, to implement and bring forth the fullness of our inheritance in Christ. The problem is, we're not even throwing out the bathwater. We're drinking it. We've acquired a taste for it, our taste has become an addiction, and we think our addiction is normal. In a brief essay format, there's no way to exhaust all the implications of our bathwater addiction, but what follows are nine unprofitable elements that I believe are floating in our tub.

### **Bathwater Issue #1 – The Devaluation of Scripture**

Do the Scriptures matter to us any more? I ask this seriously, not rhetorically. I run into scores of believers and leaders who attempt to make this argument: "We don't need a Scripture for everything, God can do unusual things." There's often token acknowledgement of the Bible as our "sole guide for faith and practice," but in practice, it's little more than lip service and philosophical cover.

There's a difference between un-biblical prohibitions and non-biblical issues (the difference between immoral and a-moral things). I'm in for that, including accommodating unusual manifestations. However, if "we don't need a Scripture for everything" means that any attempt to evaluate manifestations by the standard of Christ and Him crucified is deemed judgmental, critical, legal, or "not open to the Spirit," then I'm out. God can never do anything inconsistent with His character and the Scriptures reveal His character.

"We don't need a Scripture for everything" is currently being used to justify extra-biblical and non-biblical supernatural phenomenon such as talking with deceased saints and famous persons from the past, prophesying to and communicating with animals, and angelic encounters of dubious biblicality (see #9 below). These practices, and others like them, are being promoted as the "new thing," God is doing, or the "new" prophetic dimension.

There is no subtle way to say it. This is demonic level deception. Talking to the dead is called necromancy. It's an occult sin. People who've been talking to the dead should not be given the testimony microphone. They should be taken to the deliverance room.

Folks, if we've come to the place where the Scriptures and the preeminent revelation of Christ and Him crucified are devalued in favor of supernatural encounters and manifestations, we might as well quit now. We're devil bait. If you're of the persuasion, based on your hunger for the touch of God's manifest presence, that "we don't need a Scripture for everything," you might as well not bother reading the rest of this newsletter. Nothing I say will matter to you.

### **Bathwater Issue #2 - The Attestation Value of Supernatural Power**

The number of believers and leaders I meet who believe that the manifestation of supernatural power somehow proves that God is real alarms me. The presence or

absence of power MEANS NOTHING. Power can be counterfeited. They're called lying signs and wonders, done with all power, if possible, able to deceive the very elect (2Thess.2:9; Mt. 24:24). They're real. Have we forgotten that not only Moses' staff, but also Jannes and Jambre's staff turned into a snake? Therefore, the pragmatic argument: "it must be God because people are getting healed and raised from the dead," is erroneous, dangerous and should be confronted.

*"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matt 24:24 KJV*

The last testifying work God did was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. God is alive and trustworthy because the Scripture says so, and because Jesus Christ is alive in resurrection at the right hand of the Father, not because someone gets healed or not.

Some might say, "What about signs and wonders? Don't they bear witness to Christ?" For us, the manifestation of things supernatural is an "unusual event," mostly due to the influence of centuries of Western rationalism which doesn't allow for anything supernatural within an "educated" worldview. Arid rationalism is just as bad as unjudged manifestations. In Christ's time, pagan exorcists, folk healers, and wonder workers were commonplace. Christ and the apostles were not the only ones performing supernatural wonders.

Signs and wonders testified for Jesus because they accompanied other elements in Christ's life. Consider a step stool analogy. A stool must have at least three legs to stand. The minimal three legs (there are likely others) of our discernment stool are: the man (person), the message, and the ministry. If any one of the three is missing or out of order, the wonder or sign has no testifying validity to the person manifesting it or the ministry of the person.

### **The Man (person)**

Imperfect and seriously flawed people can manifest genuine supernatural gifts from God. The church in Corinth proves that and gives hope to us all! However, crooked and corrupt people can manifest supernatural manifestations from our adversary. Balaam gave the only accurate Messianic prophecy in the Pentateuch, but because he, himself, was false, his ministry was false and not to be associated with, emulated, or followed. Jesus' signs were attesting because of His character and relationship to His Father.

When it comes to discernment and issues of God's validation, character counts, not power. Ethics, behavior, methods (particularly where money is concerned) and interpersonal relationships all matter.

### **The Message**

Jesus' miracles testified to who He was because He accurately represented the Father's mind and interests. Contrary to over-whelming sentiment among many

Charismatic's, (especially those with evangelistic inclinations) doctrine counts. By doctrine I don't mean monolithic agreement on every issue. I mean the accurate representation of Jesus Christ from the Scriptures in New Covenant, grace-based, transforming power. Even the Mosaic Law (Deu.13:1-4) made it clear that a genuine sign or wonder that was accompanied by a false message was to be ignored and the individual performing the sign or wonder was to be put to death! A fairly strong sentiment I would say.

*"If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 And the sign or the wonder he foretells to you comes to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods — gods you have not known — and let us serve them, 3 You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being." AMP*

Neither Jesus nor Paul made the working of signs and wonders the central feature of their ministry. NEVER. Christ only did what His Father told Him to do, when and how He was told (Jn. 8:29). He encouraged recipients of miracles to just do what they were supposed to do, and not make a big deal out of it (Mt. 8:4). Of course, they being like us just ignored what He said. For Paul, Christ and Him crucified was always central (1.Cor.2:2). The reality of the Holy Spirit as the Empowering Presence was second in importance, and supernatural signs were somewhere in the distance.

*"For I resolved to know nothing (to be acquainted with nothing, to make a display of the knowledge of nothing, and to be conscious of nothing) among you except Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and Him crucified." 1 Cor 2:2 AMP*

### **The Ministry (the miraculous works)**

Signs and wonder attest only when (at a minimum) accompanied by the other two qualities (biblical character, the person & biblical doctrine, the message). If someone walks on water and raises the dead, but lacks the other two elements, they, and their ministry mean nothing to me.

Biblical miracles had a context and an object. They either relieved human suffering, testified to Christ as coming from and being one with the Father, or both. "Free-standing" signs and wonders that are decontextualized do not relieve human suffering, or which seem to occur for little reason other than the thrill factor of the saints, should be viewed with a high degree of skepticism, if not rejection.

### **Bathwater Issue #3 - A Lack of Discernment**

In our Church culture even the mildest attempt at rebuke or correction is greeted with a howl of protests about being judgmental, harsh, critical, religious, Pharisaical, and condemning.

By definition, something that's perfect doesn't need to be evaluated. Human vessels are involved in all aspects of ministry, including supernatural manifestations and we're not

perfect. That's why Paul is clear in 1 Corinthians 12-14 that supernatural manifestations, especially prophecy (because of its instructive element and influence upon the whole community) must be judged and evaluated.

There's a reason one of the gifts of the Spirit is the discerning of spirits . . . we need it! It's rarely used. Discerning people are frequently accused of being "critical" and "not open to the moving of God's Spirit." The gift of discerning of spirits is like seeing in 3-D Technicolor in a universe where everyone else sees in 2-D black and white. It is human nature to resist what is not understood, especially when corrective. It takes a very mature 2-D person to be able to receive what a 3-D discerner has to say. 3-D folks eventually get tired of being beaten down as being "negative and critical," so they just give up—in no small amount of self-doubt and despair. Thus, that gift is neutralized.

The kind of critical judgment we're forbidden (Mt. 7:1) is judgment that condemns. That is, a kind of "final sentence" condemnation of people. To do so, means we've determined the limitations of God's redemptive power, and of course, only God can do so.

*"Judge not, that ye be not judged." KJV*

However, the same Scripture that forbids condemning judgment tell us to judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24). According to Isa. 11:2-5 this means not evaluating by sight or hearing (merely our natural faculties, prejudices, and preferences) but to judge all things from the perspective of Christ and His Cross. Not judging by our natural faculties prevents us from reacting to, or being put off by outward packages, presentations, and methods that we just might not care for. We must look beyond those things but we are mandated to evaluate supernatural manifestations.

#### **Bathwater Issue #4 – Celebrityism**

*Shun as you would the plague, a cleric who from being poor has become wealthy, or who, from being nobody has become a celebrity. St. Jerome.*

*You have reached the pinnacle of success as soon as you become uninterested in money, compliments, or publicity. Thomas Wolfe*

Why do we celebrate and elevate someone who allegedly works miracles, but someone who quietly cares for the sick, the disabled, the elderly, day after day, year after year barely gets our attention? Why do we celebrate power, but not selfless service? Why are wonder workers celebrated, but those who maintain their faith in the presence of suffering and/or persecution go unnoticed? There are no headlines, conferences and "seed" offerings for them.

Why will we spend thousands of dollars to travel to see the latest wonder working ministry, but will not open our hearts or our wallets and inconvenience ourselves to visit the disabled person across the street? Why do only the great and grand get our

attention? Why do we ignore Jesus' admonition to not run hither and yon based on reports of Him being here or there geographically (Mt. 24:23-24)?

*"If anyone says to you then, Behold, here is the Christ (the Messiah)! or, There He is! — do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and they will show great signs and wonders so as to deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect (God's chosen ones). 25 See, I have warned you beforehand." AMP*

Since when (humanly speaking) has God initiated anything on a great and grand scale? Even the incarnation itself was hardly recognized as a significant event. Bethlehem was off the map, and looking in a manure filled stable for significance would not be #1 on our list of leadership principles of "how to build a successful ministry."

I believe our value systems in this regard are shameful, and spiritually bankrupt. Our personality-based, gift-based, event-based, pizzazz-based, excitement-based, conference-based, hype-based, offering-based value system is terminally flawed.

Success breeds celebrity along with all its attendant temptations. Fame is inherently intoxicating. Being a Christian celebrity plays into the worst elements of our culture that are impressed by fame and fortune rather than character and message. I think we could take a note or two from Jesus' habits of downplaying miracles, withdrawing to be alone after successful ministry (Mt. 14:23), or withdrawing when they wanted to make him king (Jn. 6:15). If it had been us, we would have held a conference. "Send the multitudes away" is not frequently in our vocabulary. Christ's kingdom, never has, and never will, come with observation by sight. Lk.17:20-21

*"Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He replied to them by saying, The kingdom of God does not come with signs to be observed or with visible display, Nor will people say, Look! Here [it is]! or, See, [it is] there! For behold, the kingdom of God is within you [in your hearts] and among you [surrounding you]. AMP*

### **Bathwater Issue #5 – The Expert Syndrome**

Dependence on a single gifted individual in a conference format plays to excitement and enthusiasm and a sense of an "event" happening, touches from the Lord, and so forth, but is inadequate to reconfigure or empower the saints and equip them for life and local church functionality. You might say, "How can you say that?"

Well, we've been doing revivalistic, crusade, and conference ministry in various forms for 200 years or more. What is the result? In America 80% of churches are in numeric decline and the other 20% are either flat-lined or growing because of transfers, not conversions. Charismatic Churches are notoriously fragmented—split, after split, after split. Pentecostal Christians have the highest divorce rate in the world, higher than even atheists. Something "ain't right."

At one level I say, "Well, the gifted individual-conference model may be limited, but hey, thank God, at least somebody is trying!" Yet a higher wattage version of the same thing

we've been doing for 200 years is not exactly kingdom progress in my book. I think other ministry methods are worth considering. I'm not impressed with supernatural manifestations that happen in a meeting format alone. I am looking for the reality of lasting life-transforming power, and that takes time to evaluate. You simply cannot make a valid judgment based on a series of highly charged meetings.

Also, the gifted evangelists are not likely to show up at my local church or at my child's bedside in the night. Even the great healing evangelists of generations gone by understood that the ultimate objective was to equip the local church and the Body of Christ for full functionality, not just rely on one or two highly gifted individuals. We need to equip the average believer to function within his or her sphere of life and grace endowment and not rely on the out-of-town expert, the out-of-town conference, and "bringing back an impartation." I realize ministries exist that are highly committed to ground level, non-celebrity-based equipping. They are to be commended.

Another problem with relying on a singular gifted individual is that the ministry tends to cease when they die. I know there are all kinds of notions about "impartation" and mantle transfer, and generational transfer and such. I can't digress too far into these issues, but I do have my doubts about a good bit of it.

If the Holy Spirit decides who gets what gift (1Cor. 12:11), I'm not quite sure I can categorically pass on my "package" to someone who I may think is my spiritual heir, or transfer my "anointing" to others through the laying on of hands or other metaphysical exercises. If the Holy Spirit hasn't put "it" in someone by His own sovereign choosing, I can't put "it" in someone through "mantle transfer." We can, and should, pass the torch of Gospel passion for the Person and message of Christ to another generation, but I'm not sure about transferring much more than that, especially a gift package or "anointing," even considering the Elijah/Elisha motif 2 Kings 2:10.

*"He said, You have asked a hard thing. However, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you — but if not, it shall not be so."*

*"All these [gifts, achievements, abilities] are inspired and brought to pass by one and the same [Holy] Spirit, Who apportions to each person individually [exactly] as He chooses."*  
AMP

### **Bathwater Issue #6 - Gift Elevation**

One of my dearest friends gave all her mortal adult days to the care of her disabled mother. She eschewed marriage, career, travel, and riches for what? Wiping her mother's brow (and other parts of her anatomy). If that's not a manifestation of true Calvary love and supernatural power, I don't know what is. I don't possess the kind of grace empowerment my dear friend had.

She was one of those individuals who can be so easily overlooked in many frenetic church environments. Her temperament and personality were not innately aggressive or forward-putting. She did not need, nor demand, center stage attention. She just

incarnated the life of Christ on earth, manifesting self-less love and service, but that's not enough to register in an impressive way in our "style-over-substance," signs-and-wonders obsessed value system. We wouldn't think of giving her the testimony microphone . . . not enough flash . . . not enough bling. Thankfully, there are greater rewards for greater souls.

The working of miracles is no more significant than any of the other gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12. It should be one of the normal operations of kingdom life in a community of faith. The fact that it often isn't does say something about our rather stunted condition and regrettably opens the door to the celebrity specialist and event-based model of ministry that is our norm.

### **Bathwater Issue #7 - Power Lust**

I understand how the manifestation of supernatural power can have nearly irresistible allure for Christians who have been stuck in dead rationalistic religion for decades or centuries. Power lust is the logical reactionary response of believers whose Christian experience has been sterile. The devil will take our hunger and passion for Christ, and subtly turn it into passion for His things (power, any subordinate feature of our faith) and in so doing, snare us in our own pursuit of God. What should be legitimate accommodation to unusual manifestations of God's great grace in our midst in healings and wonders becomes an obsessive centrality.

I also understand how the manifestation of the supernatural could appeal to people in a secular culture that's not interested in 500 year-old philosophical debating society questions, but who desire a spiritual reality. However, our administration of the supernatural to an unbelieving culture must be handled with great discretion and a relentless, rigorous, irresistible magnetic pull toward the Person of Christ and His Cross.

The matter is one of emphasis: where do we put our emphasis? The Scriptures are clear where our emphasis should be. Our God is a jealous God. We love and serve Him for who He is, not for His attendant benefits.

### **Bathwater Issue #8 - Normalizing the Exceptional**

Some advocates of experiencing the miraculous would have us believe that if miracles are not occurring on a weekly basis from ten to noon on Sundays, that we're effectively backslidden. This is often preached dogmatically and condemningly, leaving the hearer with a sense of inadequacy. Any message that makes the hearer feel inadequate unless functioning identically with the person bringing the message is obviously not from God. Our insecurities and fears over potentially "missing the new thing" God is supposedly doing, makes us vulnerable to this type of gift projection and guilt mongering.

If we make normative or central those unusual and exceptional events recorded in Scripture, forsaking the only sure foundation of Christ and Him crucified, we are in big trouble. Normalizing supernatural signs and wonders as the center for Christian life and ministry will set up a psychological culture of expectation: a good or "anointed" meeting becomes defined by the occurrence of supernatural manifestations, (where we "feel" or

see something) and a “bad meeting” is one where they do not. This inevitably sets up a culture of comparison, dishonesty, fakery, striving, and performance. It will also put tremendous pressure upon those in charge to up the excitement factor week after week.

The book of Acts chronologically covers about 35 years. If you count the number of supernatural miracles/healings recorded, you’ll find that it amounts to one miracle about every five years on average. If you include the utterance manifestations (prophecy, tongues, etc) it’s about once every two years.

Therefore, the notion that we’re somehow “failing” if we don’t produce miracles on a weekly basis is an unbiblical standard. On the other side, never experiencing supernatural power is also unbiblical! Miracles are kingdom normative in the sense that buying a car is normal. Buying a car every week is not normal. By definition, miracles are exceptional.

Also, the notion that the church meeting is where miracles are supposed to happen simply cannot stand biblical scrutiny. The vast majority of Jesus’ (and the apostle’s) miracles occurred outside formal meetings. They happened in the regular day-to-day world among people who needed them. Christ and the apostles took the message and miracles to the people.

### **Bathwater Issue #9 – Angels**

Much is being made in regard to angels in the current events in FL. Again, the topic could be a small book in itself, but let’s hit a few major points:

1. We don’t venerate angels. Angels are ministers to us, the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). They’re our servants, sent at the Father’s command.

*“Are not the angels all ministering spirits (servants) sent out in the service [of God for the assistance] of those who are to inherit salvation?” AMP*

2. Christ is superior to the angels (Heb. 2). Our focus, our emphasis, our need for guidance, instruction and power comes from Christ, and His indwelling Spirit, not angelic messengers. A legitimate angelic messenger will point to Christ.

3. Redeemed, Spirit-filled human beings “out rank” the angels in cosmic hierarchy (Psa. 8:2 – “angels” in KJV should be Elohim—the majesty on high—humans are a little lower than the Elohim, but higher than angels). We share in the divine nature they do not (2Pe.1:4). We have a sonship relationship. They do not (Ga. 4:6). The angels do not even understand redemption (1Pe.1:12). I could go on and on. The point is: angels are no big deal. You and I are.

4. Paul admonishes against receiving teaching about or from angels (Col. 2:18). He calls it being vainly puffed up in our fleshly imaginations. The Gnostics emphasized and elevated angels and made them integral in their understanding of the cosmos and how it operated.

*“Don’t let anyone deny you the prize by insisting that you engage in self-mortification or angel-worship. Such people are always going on about some vision they have had, and they vainly puff themselves up by their worldly outlook.” CJB*

5. If and when anyone sees an angel, the first thing to do is to challenge it in the name of Christ to identify itself, and to identify from whom it is sent.

### **Conclusion**

George Santayana said; *“those who do not study history are destined to repeat it.”*

The events in Lakeland are not new in a qualitative way. The core values are the same as they’ve been for decades. Some of what is occurring is God, some is the flesh, and some is the devil. That’s the way it always is, and it’s ok. We just have to exercise discernment. What is not ok is to attribute unique significance to the manifestation of power.

God is big enough, good enough, and gracious enough to be simultaneously active on multiple levels. Regarding Lakeland, I believe God is doing wonderful things for individuals, and at the same time giving the Pentecostal/Charismatic branch of the church, another opportunity to come to grips with itself and its flawed and corrupt value systems and practices.

Those of us over 40 have been this way before and the end is always a train wreck . . . William Branham . . . Evan Roberts . . . John Alexander Dowie . . . Tertullian . . . Edward Irving . . . and many others still living.

Someone once told me that the most risky thing God could do for the Church is bless it with His manifest power. I understand what he was driving at. There’s only one foundation for life and ministry: Christ and Him crucified.

### **Any ministry that:**

- makes signs and wonders the center piece
- makes the working of wonders the foundation of their existence, their appeal, their draw
- pursues manifestations, signs, and wonders as a core value system will end in disaster and destroy the lives of those who have associated with them intentionally or by ignorance.

I don’t say this in a prescribing failure sort of way. My desire is that repentance would occur and adjustment and alignment to Christ in thought and practice would realize all the benefits of the present realities of His kingdom while avoiding the painful pitfalls. The Lord’s testimony and the lives of people are at stake. Without deep change in value systems and methods, disaster and carnage are as inevitable as showers in April.