

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 15, No. 9

September 2004

A PETITION REGARDING ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

To the honorable members of the Board of Trustees for Abilene Christian University: Greetings. We hope this finds you in good health. We pray that the Lord will bless you and endow you with wisdom and good judgment in all things.

We approach you in respect of your positions, fully understanding the burden you bear regarding the salvation and instruction of students at Abilene Christian University (ACU). We also approach you in confidence that you will hear our petition, that you will evaluate its contents, and that you will take appropriate actions.

OUR CONCERN:

Our concern is that the present Board of Trustees of ACU have allowed or in some cases encouraged ACU to depart from the purposes and values of its founders. As stated in the 1906 charter, the composition and expectations of the Board of Directors are as follows:

...each of whom shall be a member of a congregation of the church of Christ, which takes the New Testament as its only and sufficient rule of faith, worship and practice, and rejects from its faith, worship and practice everything not required by either precept or example, and which does not introduce into

the faith, worship or practice, as a part of the same or as adjuncts thereto any supplemental organization or anything else not clearly and directly authorized in the New Testament either by precept or example.

EVIDENCES FOR OUR CONCERN:

There are numerous examples of departures from the founders' charter and from the precept and example of the New Testament: ACU has changed to allow **dancing** and a recognized **dance club**. A Bible professor was shown in the Abilene Reporter News **drinking wine**. **Instrumental music** in worship has been made a non-fellowship issue by many faculty members. Students who are **members of denominations** have been allowed to organize religious activities on campus. The use of ACU facilities for **denominational activities** has been authorized by the administration. There has been the encouragement in chapel that students attend **denominational worship activities**. There has been the advocating and encouragement of **women to take on roles in worship and ministry of the church not permitted by Scripture**.

The following examples describe briefly some particularly disturbing occurrences:

1. The 2004 ACU Lectureship

organizers sought speakers who taught matters contrary to Scripture. Simultaneously ACU announced their choice of the Outstanding Alumnus of the year, choosing **Max Lucado** for that honor, a man who has abandoned the use of the name "Church of Christ," and has abandoned the belief that baptism is necessary and essential for salvation.

2. ACU invited **Katie Hays**, a radical feminist who is the preacher for the West Islip "Church of Christ" in West Islip, NY, and whose church has female shepherds, to critique the ACU advanced preaching students' sermons, and to deliver a sermon at the Chapel.

3. ACU has invited **Tony Campolo**, a Northern Baptist (the liberal wing of the Baptist church), to speak at ACU in Chapel, where he recruited students to work in his evangelistic ministry. Several denominations were allowed to use Moody Coliseum for an inter-denominational joint "revival" with Campolo as the evangelist. Letters were sent out to churches by "Habitat for Humanity" encouraging people to attend and how glorious it was going to be when "Christians" of all the denominations raised their voices in fellowship and worship.

4. At least some ACU Bible professors have a functionally different belief regarding baptism. One profes-

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Abilene Christian...



Guest Editorial

GOD'S WILL CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH

Dan Guy

Consider the following scenario: A young Gospel preacher was invited to speak at a neighboring congregation. Upon his arrival his attention was drawn to an apostate preacher in the audience. He had been marked (Rom. 16:17) some years earlier by the young Gospel preacher's home congregation for teaching false doctrine. Letters of his marking were sent to all local congregations. During the song service the song leader called upon the apostate preacher to lead in prayer. This young Gospel preacher refused to partake in the prayer of the false teacher. Concerned not only with this apostate preacher's presence but also his partaking in the service, the young preacher considers this as an opportunity and exercises his responsibilities as a preacher of the Gospel. Stepping behind the pulpit, he singles out the apostate and addresses the congregation, concerning the error of allowing the apostate preacher to participate in the service. He then continued with his sermon.

Did he err in his handling of the situation or did he follow God's will?

In Titus 1:11, the will of God is revealed to us concerning false teachers in the church. God made it clear he wants their mouths to be stopped! Their teaching must be exposed and refuted in order to preserve the doctrinal purity of the Lord's church and to save the innocent in Christ. False teachers mouths must be stopped in order to obey God who commanded it to be done (Titus 1:11; John 14:15). It must be done lovingly and courageously so that false teachers become aware of their sin, repent and be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).

Contrary to the irrationality and ignorance of the Bible by some, it is Scriptural to mark (name) false teachers. How else would we know of Hymenaeus and Alexander if Paul had not written of them (1 Tim. 1:20;

2 Tim. 2:17)? Paul not only named them but also named their sin (blasphemy). In 2 Tim. 2:18, the false teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus is described to be as deadly as gangrene. Paul defines false teachers as those who "err from the truth," and will "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18; Titus 1:11). Once the cancerous nature of false teaching is planted, it influences and afflicts others by slowly eating away at the faith of Christians just as gangrene cuts off the blood supply and destroys the tissue of the human body. False teaching strangles the blood supply of truth that flows to the hearts of Christians. Because it is so deadly and so insidious in nature, the faithful should be stirred up to expose it, denounce it, and refuse to tolerate it being motivated by love and concern for the souls that have been afflicted by it.

The primary responsibility to shut the mouths of false teachers lies with the elders in local congregations (Titus 1:9). Yet, preachers by the very nature of their work will also be directly involved. Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:1-4 was to "Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."

All Christians, likewise, have a responsibility to reject false teachers by marking, exposing, and withdrawing fellowship from them that they, as well as others, will not be partners of their evil deeds (Rom. 16:17; Eph. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 John 9-11). Christians serving under faithful elders must uphold the efforts of the elders and their preacher to correct or reject false teachers (Titus 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6; Heb. 13:7,17). When Christians in local congregations are notified of false teachers being marked, they are responsible for establishing the validity of the

claims (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1). They must then heed the Scriptural commands of Ephesians 5:11 and Romans 16:17 to not fellowship them and avoid them. According to Isaiah, the responsibility of the watchman upon the walls of Jerusalem was to "never hold their peace day or night," so that the inhabitants could be warned when necessary (Isa. 62:6). **The analogy for elders, preachers, and all Christians (in context with Isaiah 62) is that we have been set as watchmen to uphold, speak, and defend the truth.**

Some brethren become upset when false teachers are publicly marked. The mind-set of such brethren is that any dealings with marked false teachers is to be done privately (behind the scenes) according to Matthew 18:15-17. This is a flagrant abuse of Scripture. This passage, in context, tells how to handle private conflicts between individuals. It does not address public false teaching. Misrepresenting this passage is an attempt by false teachers and their supporters to undermine the Scriptures and to argue against any attempt at exposing their false positions as well as those with whom they associate.

For Scriptural examples of the need and responsibility to rebuke sharply false teachers (Titus 1:13), consider the following:

John the Baptist rebuked Herod for living in adultery (Matt. 4:1-12).

Christ rebuked the Pharisees by telling them to their face that Satan was their father (John 8:12-59).

Peter rebuked Simon for desiring to buy the ability of "laying on of hands" to impart miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:13-23).

Paul's rebuke to the Judaizers (whose intent was to bind circumcision on the Gentiles) was that he would not tolerate such men and their false teachings for even an hour (Gal. 2:4-5).

Paul rebuked Peter "to the face before them all" (Gal. 2:11-14). When Peter and others separated themselves from the Gentiles and refused to eat with them upon the arrival of the Jews sent from James, Paul knew they failed in living up to the truth of the Gospel. Their actions made them guilty of supporting false teachers (2 John 9-11) and was sinful

(1 John 3:4). It gave credence to the false doctrine of the Judaizers. The others are not specifically named in this rebuke (except for Barnabas), but since they were partakers in this error, their actions are likewise rebuked. Peter is singled out as the chief offender because he knew better (Acts 10:34-35) and had the most influence, being an apostle. If it was right for Paul to take such action, it is right for Christians today to take similar actions in parallel situations.

Did the young Gospel preacher err in his rebuke? The Answer is: NO! Let us not become weary in well doing but continue to contend for the faith once delivered (Jude 3).

NOTE: Some excerpts were taken from the pamphlet, “*Stopping Their Mouths*” by Gary Grizzell and used by permission. This pamphlet can be ordered by contacting Gary Grizzell at (931) 432-6984 or by email at tracts@charter.com.

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Abilene Christian...

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sor is in print advocating fellowship between those who believe that baptism is “for” the remission of sins and “because of” the remission of sins and thus treating as brothers and sisters in Christ, those of the various denominations who have not been scripturally immersed for the forgiveness of sins. Such teaching compromises the clear New Testament teaching that baptism is essential for salvation.

5. ACU exhibits examples of conflicts of interests with denominations, at the financial level, and at the level of preaching regarding the Gospel and the Kingdom (church).

6. ACU gives unclear and misleading teachings about the nature of the New Testament church.

7. These teachings and practices have led some ACU students to abandon sound doctrine as well as the churches of Christ, and attend denominations instead, or return home to foment rebellion and division in unsuspecting churches.

In summary of the above, the ACU Board of Trustees have thus encouraged or allowed ACU to contradict and leave the founders’ clear intentions and instructions in the 1906 Charter, and have drifted away from Biblical, sound doctrine and practice.

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

1. Evaluate carefully and demand that both members of the Board of Trustees and the school administration of ACU be committed to the clear intention of the university’s founding fathers and that they oversee and administrate in a much more responsible manner, and that they resolve these aforementioned deficiencies.

2. If current ACU leadership is unwilling or unable to comply with this, that you will take appropriate personnel action to relieve these people of their duties.

3. Address those imbalances in the ACU Board of Trustees and the Bible Department that are currently heavily weighted toward those holding a less exclusive, vague, or unclear view of fellowship and doctrine.

4. Sever all financial interests with denominations.

5. Assure the brotherhood and demand of faculty that the Biblical pattern of conversion is and will be unapologetically taught. Such statements as, “I will not judge anyone’s faith — God knows who are His,” leaves the implication that baptism is optional, not necessary and essential.

6. Assure that the Biblical pattern of the New Testament church of Christ is unapologetically taught. This includes a thorough discussion of the following points:

- a. The NT church worships according to the New Testament pattern in spirit and truth (John 4:20-24).
- b. The NT church searches the Scriptures for sole authority in belief and practice rather than the teachings of men (Acts 17:10).
- c. The NT church observes the Lord’s Supper every Sunday (Acts 20:6,7; 1 Cor. 11:18-30; 16:1,2).
- d. The NT church gives both the bread and the fruit of the vine to those who participate in communion, and we practice open, not closed communion (Luke 22:14-20; Mark 14:22-26).
- e. The NT church worships by singing songs, hymns and spiritual songs, and without instrumental accompaniment since there is no authority for the use of instrumental music in the NT practice of the church (Eph. 5:15-21; 1 Cor. 14:15; Col. 3:15-17).
- f. The NT church exalts Christ as the only begotten Son of God and her only head and strives to be like him in word and deed as a living pattern for our lives (Eph. 1:20-23).
- g. The NT church teaches that the Lord adds only the saved to his church and that there are no saved outside the church (Acts 2:36-38,47; Eph. 5:23-25,32).
- h. The NT church selects only men to serve as shepherds (elders) who meet scriptural qualifications (Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17, 28-30).

- i. The NT church is committed to male church leadership and selects only men to serve as preachers in her pulpits (1 Tim. 2:8-12; 1 Cor. 14:34-36).
 - j. The NT church does not teach the use of special titles such as Reverend, Pastor or Father or make provisions for special vestments to be worn by preachers, and that there is no division in the New Testament church between clergy and laity (Matt. 23:5-11; Matt. 20:25-28).
 - k. The NT church accepts all believers who have been immersed for the remission of sins into fellowship, regardless of religious, social or ethnic backgrounds (Rom. 6:17; Gal. 3:26-28).
7. Assure that all freshmen are introduced to the Biblical patterns of conversion and the New Testament church of Christ in their first semester at ACU, and assure such exposure for all transferring students as well.
8. Investigate all undergraduate Bible teachers and curricula and assure these are committed to the restoration of New Testament Christianity according to the New Testament pattern and are doctrinally sound in the faith. This should include a questionnaire about basic beliefs of the teacher.
9. Investigate all graduate Bible teachers and curricula and assure these are committed to the restoration of New Testament Christianity according to the New Testament pattern and are doctrinally sound. This should include a questionnaire about basic beliefs of the teacher.
- Students understandably are asked to read materials written by those who are not members of the churches of Christ; however, brethren, it is one thing to ask that people read material containing false doctrine in order to learn how to refute it. It is quite another to require readings by radical feminists and liberal theologians with no repudiation of their false teachings.

CONCLUSION:

We have love and respect for Christ, His church, ACU, and the

ACU Board of Trustees. We do not hate you, and we do not hate ACU. Many of us have had several generations of our families graduate from ACU. Many of us have received great benefit from attending ACU. Many of us met our mates at ACU. We are deeply thankful for the many years of positive influence at ACU.

ACU was built with the sacrifices of common men and women who desired Biblical instruction for their children. We now beg you to regard the uncountable sacrifices of men and women whose money built and sustained ACU over nearly a century. Please do not betray their trust, or the values of the founders of ACU.

We thank you that you have allowed us to present this petition, that you will consider it, and that you will take appropriate action. We have confidence that you can, and will, do this.

We have added our signatures to this petition.

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NOTE:

This petition is being circulated throughout the brotherhood in an attempt to inform brethren of some things that are going on at ACU and to seek others who may wish to add their name to it. If you would like to add your name to the list, you may send it to:

Vic Vadney
1440 Key Lane
Abilene, TX 79602

The apostasy at ACU has been going on for many many years and is the same as many other like institutions and schools all across the brotherhood. There is no apparent concern for Biblical authority or soundness.

They feel as though they cannot be touched. Let's make sure we do not touch them with our money or other support of any kind.

The Scriptures are clear when it tells us to not support error. Notice these passages:

Eph. 5:11, "*And have **no fellowship** with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*"

II John 1:9-11, "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, **receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.***"

Rom. 16:17-18, "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*"

I John 4:1, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*"

John 3:19-21, "*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*"

If these Scriptures do not apply in this situation, then none do.

Gospel preaching and congregational singing (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) can be heard on the internet all around the world. This program comes from the East End church of Christ in McMinnville, Tennessee. Tell others about it. For those who maintain a web page, consider adding this link so others may benefit as well.

www.pioneerpreachers.com

Click on the LISTEN button that appears under the Bible. If this is the first time you have entered this page, you will need to download and install the *player365* (it is free). The next time you enter, it will start playing automatically.

THE ONE BODY

Marvin L. Weir

It is the church which Christ built that people should give their allegiance to.

People often make amazing decisions based purely upon biased or prejudiced feelings. The Bible clearly reveals that the church of the Lord is **one** body (Eph. 4:4). A human body with two or more heads would be considered an abnormality. The same would be true of a human head having two or more bodies. The human body is used in the Scriptures as a metaphor of the church or the body of Christ.

The church of our Lord is one body. The apostle Paul says, “*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 12:27). It is not **a** body, **some** body, or **any** body! There is only **one** body, but many members of the one body. Paul likewise taught, “*so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*” (Rom. 12:5).

In the world, there are many different religious bodies all claiming Christ as the one head. Such surely is the wistful thinking of man because such a concept cannot be found in the word of God! Christ promised to build only His church (Matt. 16:18). He never claimed to build one belonging to someone else. The apostle Paul did not die for the Lord’s church and neither did Peter or Apollos (1 Cor. 1:10-13). The church and the body are terms that

refer to the *same* thing. The Bible, in speaking of what God purposed for Christ says, “*he [God] put all things in subjection under his [Christ] feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*” (Eph. 1:22-23). There is only **one body** for which Christ died (Eph. 4:4; Acts 20:28) and there is only **one body** He has promised to save (Eph. 5:23).

The act of baptism puts one into the one body of Christ. Paul proclaims, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:13). The same apostle taught the Galatians, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ*” (Gal. 3:27). Peter commanded those on Pentecost to “*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins*” (Acts 2:38). In giving the Great Commission Jesus says, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). Bible baptism is a **burial** and not a **sprinkling** as is evidenced by studying the fourth verse of the sixth chapter of Romans.

All people are to be members of the same body. It matters not whether one is young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated — all who obey God’s word are members of the same body. To the Galatians Paul said, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:28-29).

Each member of the one body is important. “*And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you*” (1 Cor. 12:21). All members of the body are to work together for the glory of God. What

one member does or does not do can have an effect on the rest of the body. It is also easy for folks to see that one leg does not travel in one direction while the other leg travels in the opposite direction and yet both legs end up at the same destination. Such is the claim of many religious groups who contend that although they take different routes (in doctrine and worship) they will all arrive at the same destination (Heaven).

Jesus taught the truth, saying, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:21-23).

There is to be no division in the one body of the Lord. The plea of the inspired Scriptures is that members of the body are to give “*diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph. 4:3). Please note that this is not some man-made, man-agreed upon unity, but rather the “*unity of the Spirit.*” One who desires to go to Heaven will listen to the Spirit speak through the Word instead of listening to men speak through their creed books!

Religious division is sinful and contrary to the will of Christ. It is not the church of man’s choice but rather the church which Christ built (Matt. 16:18) that people should give their allegiance to.

Pride will stand between many people and their obedience to the Gospel. Bias and prejudice will cause multitudes to reject the simple truth found in God’s word. How horrible it will be for those who had every opportunity to see and understand, yet chose to remain blind to God’s truth!

5810 Liberty Grove Rd.
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A new “Bible Study Helps” page has been added to:

www.seektheoldpaths.com

This is on the bottom left corner of the screen. You will find several Bible study tools to help you in your study. You can search for certain words or phrases in the Bible or search through word studies and dictionaries. There is also an excellent Bible atlas. Check it out and pass on the word.

MIRACLES HAPPENED AND MIRACLES CEASED

Charles Box

The Bible teaches that miracles both happened and ceased. Men in our city and across our nation claim to be miracle workers today. I believe what the Bible teaches about miracles. Therefore I believe these men are frauds.

They do not teach the Gospel plan of salvation. God's plan of salvation is for a penitent believer to confess faith in Jesus and be baptized for salvation (Acts 2:36-41). Most of those who claim miracles today teach salvation through the "sinners prayer" and accepting Jesus. Would God give miracles to such false teachers?

They do not teach New Testament worship. Most of the so-called "Miracle Working" churches have women in leadership roles, instruments of all kinds, do not observe communion weekly and participate in other acts of worship foreign to the New Testament (Read I Cor. 14:34, Acts 20:7, Eph. 5:19). Will God give real miracles to those who teach and practice false worship?

They do not practice Bible miracles. These religious racketeers bleed as much money as they can from the poor, unsuspecting and helpless. They make a mockery out of Christianity. They do no real miracles. Jesus performed great miracles, real miracles! Nicodemus said, "*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*" (John 3:2). Matthew 15:30 says, "*And great multitudes came unto him, having with them [those that were] lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.*" Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves and caused the great calm (Matt. 8:26). No one is doing these miracles today!

Miracles ceased when the perfect or complete revelation was received. "*Charity never faileth: but whether [there be] prophecies, they shall fail; whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I*

know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity" (I Cor. 13:8-13).

When the last words of the New Testament were written in about 96 A.D. miracles had ceased. The only miracles we have or need today are those written in the Bible.

DOES THE LORD PERFORM MIRACLES TODAY?

There was a time when miracles happened. When Jesus was upon earth he performed many signs and miracles (Matt. 8:16; 9:34; 14:14-36; John 11). Jesus even gave others the power to perform miracles. But not one miracle is being performed today.

What was the purpose of miracles? Miracles were performed by Jesus, the apostles and those on whom they laid hands, to confirm the word (Mark 16:17-20.) Miracles confirmed that the message preached was divine. "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*" (John 20:30-31). Jesus performed miracles to prove His claim of being the Son of God and to confirm that what He taught was God's message.

Are miracles needed today? Everything originated by miracle, but it continues by divine law. Adam is the only man God created by miracle (Gen. 1:27-28). We were not created by miracle like Adam. God originated things by miracle but continues them through natural law.

Both Old Testament and New Testament were ushered in by miracles (Exodus 18-20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). When the New Testament was completed, the need for miracles ended. Paul described the purpose and duration of miracles in these words, "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the ful-*

ness of Christ: That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:11-14).

Are miracles being performed today? No person living on earth today has been baptized with the Holy Ghost (Eph. 4:5). There are no people living today who have had the hands of the apostles laid on them to impart miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-18). These were the only two ways miraculous powers were received. Therefore, the Lord does not perform miracles through any human today!

Miracles ceased when the perfect came. Miracles were both "in part" and temporary. Miracles ceased when the perfect or complete will of God — the New Testament — was completely revealed (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

Do Christians speak in unknown tongues today? There is no doubt that the gift of speaking in unknown tongues was a reality in the early church (Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12-14). These unknown tongues were languages (Acts 2:4-6). These languages could be interpreted (1 Cor. 14:26). Tongue speaking was the ability to speak intelligently a language you had not studied. The purpose of this miraculous gift was as a sign to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). The gift of tongue speaking ceased near the close of the first century (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

No one living today can walk on water, raise the dead or perform any other real miracle. This cannot be done because the Bible teaches miracles have ceased. Have you ever wondered why the so-called modern day miracle worker: 1) Only selects healing and tongues from I Corinthians 12, 2) Cannot raise the dead or stop a tornado, 3) Refuses to drink deadly poison, 4) Believes the Bible is incomplete and still needs confirmation, 5) Does not possess the signs of an apostle?

Let us be content with being New Testament Christians today. To become a Christian a believer must repent and be baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). True miracles caused faith (John 20:30-31). The so-called miracles of today cause doubt and confusion.

PO Box 551
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CHRISTIAN GROWTH

John D. Cotham

It is of great importance that a Christian continue to grow spiritually in Christ. It is evident from scripture that spiritual growth is a God given responsibility. Notice these verses: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2); and “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...” (2 Peter 3:18).

Peter gave a list of areas where each individual Christian must grow. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:3-10).

Notice that the apostle Peter says to ADD these things into our lives. Not only must we add them to our spiritual lives, but it is important that we continue to strengthen each of these areas in our lives.

Growth is the normal expected thing. We would be very concerned if our new born child did not begin to show evidence of proper growth. Can't we understand that God is just as concerned if one of His newborn children never grows?

Another interesting point concerning growth is that our physical bodies begin, after a while, to regress, then

finally die. On the other hand, our spiritual growth continues to progress even when our physical bodies are decaying and passing away, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

WE NEED PROPER FOOD

Good parents try to see their children are fed a proper diet. Some children want to eat only when they want to eat, and only what they want to eat. In order to grow, bodies need the proper food. Good sense tells us that the same is true with our spiritual bodies.

Peter said we need the proper spiritual food, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). The writer of Hebrews said, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14). The writer speaks of some who refused to grow and were still babes in Christ. They were still on the bottle. It is obvious from the language that the writer was rebuking these Christians for refusing to grow to a point where they could eat meat from the table.

WE NEED PROPER EXERCISE

If one goes to bed and just lies there, the body will wither away to nothing. It is deadly to refuse exercise. Doctors and other experts tell us that much of the heart problems of today are partly because of a lack of exercise. Exercise is essential to proper growth.

In like manner, spiritual exercise is suggested for the Christian, “...and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7). The way to exercise spiritually is by DOING what we can. We learn to study by studying. We learn to sing by singing. We learn to pray by

praying. We learn to win souls by winning souls. These (and others) are the areas where we need to exercise ourselves.

GROWTH NEEDS A PROPER CLIMATE

Life is sustained in a proper climate. Not many want to spend their lives in the Arctic nor the Sahara Desert. These areas are not supportive of life. It makes just as much sense to conduct our Christian lives in a proper climate or atmosphere.

Paul warned, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33); and, also, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:6-7). Paul wrote: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). The wrong friends can destroy our spiritual growth. On the other hand, strong Christian friends are most helpful to our growth in Christ.

GROWTH TAKES TIME

Nowhere is this more evident than in the example of our children. Neither a human baby nor a new babe in Christ is born full grown. Growth takes time. We understand this in physical life, but sometimes fail to see this in the spiritual lives of others.

We must be patient with new babes in Christ and to give them time to grow. However, their growth is necessary and others have a right to be concerned if they see that a newborn child of God is NOT growing at all.

God requires that we grow spiritually. Spiritual growth is to be expected of each other. The Christian that refuses to grow is already dying spiritually if he is not already dead.

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