

Discounting the Supernatural (Devotional)

I want to share with all of you a few passages of Scripture and then discuss for a few moments why I chose these.

⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under Heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?" (Acts 2:4-8 [ESV])

³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in Heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing (Colossians 1:3-6a [ESV]).

³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:39-40 [ESV])

The reason I chose to share these passages of Scripture with you this evening is because earlier today I found that a gospel preacher had written, in reference to a passage from the *Book of Hebrews*, "Further do you say that the Preacher is incapable of hyperbole? Does 'forever' always literally mean 'forever' in Scripture . . . did Paul mean that EVERY human had heard the Gospel (the Native Americans, Mongols, Aborigines, Chinese??)? I do not think so." I don't know about you, but I find these words quite disturbing.

Why are we so afraid to preach God and His miraculous powers? Why is it so hard to believe that the gospel was taken and preached to the entire world? The word translated here as "**world**" is, after all, "**kosmos**" in the original Greek, and it means just that: the world. Why do so many in the church today, including those who are preachers, so readily feel the need to deny the word of God for what it says, and exchange it for worldly wisdom?

In my humble opinion, I believe we, as a group, in our attempt to appear wise to the world, are increasingly falling dangerously under the influence of rationalistic thought. More and more often I find those in the brotherhood dismissing the

miraculous explanation in favor of a worldly, rationalistic explanation of Scripture. And the Apostle Paul had a thing or two to say to those who wished to appear wise to the world.

²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:21-22 [ESV])

¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:19-25 [ESV])

If we continue down this road of explaining away all of the miraculous and all of the supernatural aspects of Scripture, it will not be long before we have rationalized prayer out of our lives, too. In many quarters, this has already begun as scientists have determined that prayer only works because our brain releases "positive" chemicals when we pray, and they say the answer to prayers has nothing to do with God but with physical and chemical reactions. (Let's just forget, no, let's just deny there is a Creator Who made our bodies and minds in the first place!)

If this tendency to dismiss and discount the miraculous continues, we will soon find ourselves in league with the Gnostics, and be denying that Jesus came in the flesh. And this is the only named heresy in the New Testament. It is not only a dangerous heresy, it is a damnable one, too.

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. ⁹Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. (2 John 1:7-11)

We know for a fact that the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the power to speak in other languages. We know for a fact that the Spirit miraculously transported Philip from one place to another after he converted the Ethiopian eunuch. We know for a fact that the Scriptures say the gospel was taken into *"all the world."* Is it really too difficult, then, to believe that God was able to do exactly as He said He did, and take His gospel plan of salvation into *"all the world"*? I do not think so. I, for one, refuse to dismiss God's clear teaching when it comes to the miraculous, **ANYTHING** miraculous, and replace it with rationalistic, human reasoning and wisdom.