

The UNION

Get Ready to Meet the King!

God Calls His Church to
Truth, Faith and Holiness

Joan H. Richardson

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CHAPTER 18

Denying the Power

3 But know this: Difficult times will come in the last days.

² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, ⁴ traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people!

(2 Timothy 3:1-5 HCSB)

A Solid Rock

We are not here to relax with an air of sophistication. Let's begin to carefully listen, believe, repent, yield, obey, and expect great things. What is unseen is eternal; its truth is the foundation of our faith with an incorruptible goal; thus, the righteous live by faith, not by what we see. The Word is spiritual seed, alive by the Spirit in it, just as the fruit is in its seed. His words are in His Spirit, like seeds inside the fruit; His Spirit speaks the utterances of God because out of the abundance of His heart, He speaks.

By faith in Yeshua's name, His Spirit changes us and rouses us to life because His holy name is in His Spirit just as His Holy Spirit is in His name. We receive His life as we receive His words. When we take the Scriptures into our hearts by believing them, they activate His Spirit in our daily routines. The cross we carry is death to self but the joy of His life rises out of our death.

Some say they believe in Jesus but then deny the power of His words. While admitting their lives were changed by faith in Him, they deny miracles are for today! They want to stop where they started. Perhaps they think it's safe to remain in the natural world, but shrinking back from His words, they revise the good news: miracles are available to us by faith in Jesus Christ for He is alive today!

The race is before us, but when the gun went off, they stood still. Disinterested in winning its prize by believing every word of God, they don't moved from the start line. They might remain

Protestant Teachings

there until the race is over, having buried the supply that the Lord gave them to increase. Don't stop at the entrance; cross the threshold and be filled and baptized in His Holy Spirit. Overflow, be immersed, drink it up, not just the water, but the Spirit. Let's put on all the armor we can find, not coming short of the call of God in Christ. Perilous times are here!

³⁴ And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. ³⁶ For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷ Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:34-37)

When we repented and believed in His Son, God changed us. He wants to continue our transformation into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ—by miracles within us and through us! Will we surrender our bodies to Him? If we hold onto what we have, we'll lose what we think we have, refusing to give it up. He's calling us to trust in His Spirit, but we must not refuse Him. Our unbelief rejects His words, but faith receives His power.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Miracles Today?

Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. (Genesis 5:24 NIV)

Miracles testify to the virtuous, gentle, yet powerful Holy Spirit, the purity of life in the breath of God. The Spirit of God testifies by Yeshua, the Word from heaven who also speaks His Word to us. Of John the baptizer, Yeshua said:

³⁵ He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

³⁶ But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the

Denying the Power

same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. (John 5:35-36)

¹² “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to My Father. ¹³ And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14 NKJV)

Some don't believe Jesus meant what He said, but the Word of God understands the languages of men. When miracles occur in the name of Jesus Christ but we deny they're from God, how are we different from the Jews who denied His miracles came from God? Yeshua referred to an eternal sin, never forgiven, not now or in the age to come—against the Holy Spirit, i.e., attributing His works to the devil, or sinning against Him.

Saul had spoken ignorantly against the followers of Christ, and there was pardon; however, if someone imputes the miracles of the Holy Spirit to the devil, it is the eternal sin for which Jesus said there is never forgiveness. The Spirit works miracles, signs, and wonders since the life of the Creator is in His Holy Spirit.

The Word came to Noah, commanding him to build an ark to escape the coming flood. He labored one hundred twenty years to complete the project, constructing it in godly fear. Never before had it rained, but a mist had covered the ground to water it. After the animals entered the ark, God tucked in Noah's family, shutting the door just as the torrential rains poured down and the fountains of the deep opened up. The deluge lasted forty days and nights, destroying every living thing on earth.

Many of us scoffed at the story until Jesus changed our minds by miraculously transforming our hearts. Then we knew nothing is impossible for God. Since that time, we have believed that because Noah was a man with godly fear and undying faith in the God of miracles, His life and his family's lives were preserved through the worldwide flood.

Noah saved far more “unclean” than “clean” animals in his ark, and he became the father of a whole new world. By his tenacious faith, he set the standard for others, and his amazing story is ready to be revealed in our time, for *this is like the days of Noah.* (Mat. 24:37)

Protestant Teachings

Abram acted on his faith in God and left the land of Haran when he was seventy-five years old. He did not consider his age a deterrent to live by faith in God, but he obeyed the LORD. He built an altar in Shechem, and God increased His promises:

12 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: ³ And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. (Genesis 12:7 NIV)

The LORD promised Abram that he would bless all nations by his seed; although he had no seed, his faith grew stronger with time. Before Abraham received the physical evidence of the promises, he pressed in, expecting their arrival. Abraham was not disappointed. He'd believed in God, and by his faith, he has seen the nations, grafted into the olive tree. The LORD is the God of the living, and Abraham is still an example, alive by the Word of the Author who gives life to every living thing.

It was not that Abraham was perfect—he had his faults, and some were recorded in the Scriptures for anyone to read. While he was imperfect, he was chosen as patriarch of a nation through whom God would father a Son. Why choose Abram? The LORD is Sovereign and does as He pleases for His glory.

After Abram agreed with Sarai to have relations with her Egyptian servant, Hagar gave birth to Ishmael because Sarai believed Abram was virile since God had promised him a son.

When the LORD came again, he was ninety-nine and Ishmael was thirteen. At that time, God affirmed that Sarah, Abraham's aged wife, would give birth to the promised son in a year. His seed, united with his wife's seed, became the promised son. God later called him, *your son, your only son* (in *Gen. 22:2*) since Isaac was his promised son by Sarah, Abraham's formerly barren wife. It was by his miraculous conception in their old age that their son

Denying the Power

Isaac was born. When he became a man, he married his distant cousin, Rebecca, and fathered twins: Esau and Jacob. Though Esau was the firstborn, God gave Jacob both the birthright and the blessing, and Jacob took them. Afterward in the desert, he had a supernatural experience as he slept:

¹² And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

¹³ And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, *I am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

¹⁴ And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

(Genesis 28:12-14)

Jacob married Leah though he thought he married Rachel, and together with their handmaids they brought forth the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. [This was before men learned that God intended marriage between one man and one woman, for *the two shall be one flesh.* (See Gen. 2:24)]

Why did Jacob marry Leah and not Rachel? Was it that, in his drunkenness, he couldn't see straight to identify his wife, thinking he had bedded down with Rachel to consummate their marriage? or had he become drunk in order to marry Leah whom God had chosen as his wife? Interestingly, Jacob was buried beside Leah, not Rachel. The Almighty had predestined her seed, Judah, whose descendant would hold the scepter as the King of Israel, and through David's seed, Messiah was born.

The patriarchs had believed the promises, and finally the Messiah came through Judah from David's lineage, blessing all the families of the earth with salvation. When the Seed of the Spirit was received by the virgin's seed (See Gen. 3:15; cf. Is. 7:14, Mat. 1:18-23), His only biological Son was born as His eternal Word in mortal flesh: *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself ...* (2 Cor. 5:18-19a)

Protestant Teachings

Though the sin of the woman had caused the fall of mankind, God bestowed grace on the woman whose seed would die to save mankind. The Word was God (See Jn. 1:1), coming into our flesh, born as the Anointed One by His conception; having woven His Word as the seed of a man, God created a miracle that is the mystery of the life in His Word! (See Jn. 1:14)

13 “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1 NKJV)

All of the historic events and prophetic writings were supernatural, coming from a miracle-working, prophesying God with whom all things are possible for anyone who believes and lives by his faith. As He did in the days of Abraham, Moses, and Noah, God searches the earth for people willing to bring glory to His name through faith in His supernatural power.

Before believing the Scriptures, most of us thought the story of Jonah in the belly of the great fish was foolishness, not realizing the Bible is far more than some Jewish bedtime book: it’s the book about the awesome God of Israel, the all-powerful God of miracles, signs, and wonders. When God speaks, the breath in His words inspires the prophets and apostles. His words have life in them today, imparting life to believers.

Jonah’s hopeless situation in the belly of the great fish and his subsequent rebirth, as it were, onto dry ground became a sign of Yeshua’s death, burial, and resurrection. Even the prophet’s *chastisement* was a miraculous sign from our supernatural God!

When He sent plagues against Egypt, the Hebrews left the land of slavery and passed through the Red Sea, which drowned the Egyptian army that pursued them—because the God of Israel works miracles! In a desert, He fed them quail and spiritual *manna*; He gave them spiritual water to drink from a spiritual rock, traveling with them through the wilderness—all miracles!

If we profess faith in Jesus Christ, we must believe He works miracles today. At times, God speaks to us by miracles. When Yeshua healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, cleansed the lepers—the Spirit of the Father worked miracles through Him. The writings are replete with miracles of the same Spirit in believers, baptized in His power. Even the writer of the

Denying the Power

letter to the Hebrews lists miracles that happened because people through the ages believed in the miracle-working God!

Living faith quickens the relationship between God and the repentant soul: by faith, the soul is transformed by a second birth—apart from flesh—conceived by the Seed of the Spirit, the Word. Have we repented but not been born of the Spirit?

11 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

² For by it the elders obtained a good report.

(Hebrews 11:1-2)

Look, he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and all the peoples of the earth will mourn
because of him.

So shall it be! Amen. (Revelation 1:7 NIV)

If our faith doesn't include victory over the impossible, then we aren't living by faith in God. If we don't believe having faith in God brings miracles, how can we pray for miracles we need, believing He hears us? It is faith that pleases Him, not doubts.

Does anyone doubt the Holy Spirit lives in him? He should pursue God to receive Him, asking, seeking, knocking. If he will surrender his body *as a living sacrifice*, asking Christ to take control, He will, and the believer will know it if by tenacity, he refuses to be disappointed. Our Father changes lives, but we only know the One who lives in us by walking with Him.

¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 8:14-17 NIV)

Who professes the faith but lacks the power for godly living? We can believe all *about* Jesus Christ without committing our

Protestant Teachings

lives to Him. If we're uncertain whether He lives in us, we must surrender to Him in humility, seeking Him to receive us as a sacrifice, pursuing Him until we *know* He has done it. We tell Him how desperately we need to know Him; then search for Him till we receive the goal of our faith: Christ as King by His Spirit, ruling our hearts: *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Rom. 8:9b)* If we hear these words, we must act on them by faith, pressing in until He answers, pounding on the door of heaven, as it were.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17 NKJV)

Gifts of the Spirit

Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking to receive the Gift of God. Our experience is more than intellectual; His Holy Spirit is the abundant life of God, who lives in Jesus and raised Him from the dead. Is anyone empty inside? Father gives His children good gifts.

Before Jesus was born, God had given the Spirit to those who'd entrusted their lives to Him, but not as an outpouring like the one on His disciples and believers after them. He had gifted kings and prophets with supernatural power but not often. His gifts weren't widely distributed till after He ascended. Now any who believe can receive the promised supernatural gifts known to the ancients whose lives seem to outshine ours.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (1 Corinthians 13:10)

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ will be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

(Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV)

When did Paul say the perfect would come? When we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God

Denying the Power

and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ! Do we ask, “Are we there yet?” If not, then these things have not passed away. Nevertheless, many scholars contend that the perfect has come, and the miracles have gone. That leaves us in a soup. If we believe the manuscripts are perfect and complete, why do we refute their words? *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through our knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Pet. 1:3).* Do we fear the gifts?

God ordains prophets and apostles to watch over the church. Strategically placing them among congregations, He ensures the safety and sound doctrine of believers. The love of the truth leads us into the safety of His counsel. But when He returns, shall the Son of man *find faith on the earth?* (See Lk. 18:8) Is God natural or supernatural? Are we His children?

Other problems occur with the idea that the gifts have passed away: First, we see the supernatural gifts in operation by the Spirit in our Savior’s life. Although He was perfect, teachers oppose the very gifts He practiced. And Yeshua said we would do the same things and even *greater* works than His! Since that time, devoted Christians have received the promised gifts of the Holy Spirit, affirmed by Jesus as from the Father.

The apostolic writings include guidelines for the use of the miraculous gifts within the churches. The prophet Joel describes the last days’ outpouring of the Spirit whose anointing conveys His intention to declare the gospel with miracle-working power. The anointing came to men who spoke languages they did not know, yet foreigners in the crowd heard them magnifying God: another miracle from the God of miracles! When the followers in Jerusalem experienced the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy, quoting its words, Peter announced our promises:

²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. ³⁰ And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of

Protestant Teachings

the LORD come. ³² And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:28-32;cf. Acts 2:16-21)

Confirmed by the Scriptures, gifts of His Spirit encourage, teach, and correct us. Prophetic dreams and revelations may come, but never to the exclusion of the Word. When dreams are *not* from God, they confuse, deceive, tempt, divide, ensnare, or turn us from the Word. However, lying spirits cannot annul the dreams and visions sent from God. Likewise, there are false teachers galore, but they don't annul the truth of God. We must each test everything and must give account for our words.

God sends dreams and visions to warn, guide, instruct, and deliver us from sin, drawing us closer by His Spirit. He heals the broken hearted, touches us with comfort, mends a torn relationship—by a dream! He speaks to us by prophetic dreams, giving insight or inspiration; but He never contradicts His Word—ever!

³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (Acts 2:38-39) —Peter

Though false prophets tell us everything we want to hear, the Lord Himself sends true prophets and apostles to the churches. He ordains the “called out ones,” and He alone instructs them by His Spirit, never departing from His Word.

True prophets enunciate the Scriptures as aides to the body, opening the ears of our spirits and the eyes of our hearts; then, by hearing and receiving, perceiving and understanding, we realize His truth. God commands prophets to warn of impending danger (foreknowledge, Acts 21:11); to spot predators (discerning spirits, Jude 18-19) ; to contend for the truth (dividing the Word, Acts 2, 3, 7, etc.); and to expose false teachings (courage and wisdom, Acts 3:12-26). Here the gift was in operation by foreknowledge:

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus,

Denying the Power

stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea.³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30 NIV)

The same prophet also delivered a personal prophecy to the apostle—foretelling what Jerusalem had in store for Paul. The elder respected the prophet but went to the city even if it meant death to him. He was arrested and scourged. After two years, he was sent to Rome where he remained for two more years under house arrest, writing letters to the churches:

¹⁰ After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.¹¹ Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

¹² When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.¹³ Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

(Acts 21:10-13 NIV) [warning from a prophet to the apostle.]

There are *unknown* tongues, which believers speak, *not to men, but to God* (See 1 Cor. 14:2); God knows all languages and places gifts into the hearts of those who ask, seek, knock, and receive the Spirit from Him. It is unwise to criticize the gifts of His Holy Spirit.

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. (1 Corinthians 14:2 NKJV)

In the epistles to the Corinthian congregation alone, more than seventy verses describe the proper use of supernatural gifts. If we cut out, blot out, or erase their words from our minds or from their pages, we lose the promises by refusing them and are guilty of omitting and denying the words of God:

Protestant Teachings

Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:6)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

(John 14:12)

In a parable on the persistence of a man in need of bread for a visitor, the Lord continued by linking its message to having tenacious faith for the gift of God:

⁹ “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

¹¹ “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:9-13 NKJV)

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear ...
(from 1 John 4:18 NKJV)