

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

THE OLD PROPHET THAT LIED

David P. Brown

In 1 Kings 13 the sacred record informs us that God sent a young prophet to Bethel to speak against the idolatrous practices of Jeroboam. The young man faithfully complied with God's directions concerning Jeroboam. His work completed, Jeroboam invited him into his home to rest and receive a reward. But, when God commissioned the young prophet to do the work he had recently completed, He also commanded him to "**... Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel**" (1 Kings 13:9, 10). Accordingly, the young prophet faithfully responded to Jeroboam.

However, there was an old prophet who lived in Bethel. His sons witnessed the events previously recorded involving the young prophet and reported them to their father. Learning from his sons the way the young prophet had taken in returning to Judah, the old prophet went after him. Having found the young prophet, he invited him to his home. The invitation was rejected with the same words the young prophet had spoken to Jeroboam (vss. 16, 17). All was well with the young prophet until this time.

In order to get his way with the young man, the old prophet lied to him. After revealing that he, too, was a prophet, he said an angel told him that God wanted the young prophet to return with him to his home to "**... eat bread and drink water**" (vs. 18). Not judging the old prophet according to the teaching of the Law of Moses concerning how to verify the veracity of prophets and their sayings, alas, the

young prophet believed and obeyed the old prophet's lie. He died as a consequence of his disobedience (Deu. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Jer. 28:9).

"PROVE ALL THINGS"

Besides the teaching of the Law of Moses regarding such matters, the young prophet should have remembered how he proved to Jeroboam that his message was from God. When the young prophet prophesied to Jeroboam, God gave a sign (a miracle was worked) that proved the young prophet's message was God's message (vss. 4-6). If the young prophet had sought divine verification of the old prophet's report (that an angel had delivered the message he reported to the young prophet), the young man would have known that the old prophet lied to him.

This account reminds us of the apostle Paul's comments to the Galatian churches—"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Indeed, we have the obligation to be sure that the message we are hearing is God's Truth and not man's lies (John 7:24). As Paul admonished, "**Prove all things, hold fast that which is good**" (1 The. 5:21). Later in this article we will return to the teaching of Paul in the preceding passage.

Referencing the problems that false prophets of the Old Testament brought upon Israel, the apostle Peter wrote to

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Guest Editorial...

ACCUSATIONS

Michael Hatcher

Webster's dictionary defines *accusation* as: "1: the act of accusing: the state or fact of being accused 2: a charge of wrongdoing". The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines *accusation* to be "a charge or claim that someone has done something illegal or wrong."

There is nothing wrong with making accusations. Ask yourself, is there any Old Testament prophet that did not make accusations against kings, priests, the people, and/or others? Jesus certainly made accusations against the Jews of His day. A casual reading of Matthew 23 reveals Jesus making numerous accusations against the scribes and Pharisees. In the preceding chapter, Jesus accused the Herodians of being hypocrites and tempting Him, then accused the Sadducees of erring and not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. In Matthew 15, He accused the Pharisees of being blind leaders of the blind. The entire epistle of Jude is filled with accusations and is parallel with 2 Peter 2.

Paul certainly made several accusations throughout his writings. He even went so far as to call the Judaizing teachers dogs (Phi. 3:2). In view of the false doctrine they were attempting to bind on the Gentile brethren concerning circumcision, in graphic language he made it clear that church would be better off if they mutilate themselves (Gal. 5:12). Furthermore, the apostle accused Hymenaeus and Alexander of blaspheming (1 Tim. 1:19-20). He also charged Hymenaeus and Philetus with overthrowing the faith of some by teaching the false doctrine that the resurrection is already past (2 Tim. 2:17-18)—the same error Max King and his followers teach today.

Generally speaking, brethren are not concerned with such accusations even though we know some would oppose any accusations made against anybody about anything. However, we know that the previously noted Biblical accusations are true as are any other accusations made by Deity. We also know that some take the untenable position that although the Bible will identify false teachers (make accusations against false doctrines and erring individuals who teach them), they, nevertheless, oppose anyone doing the same thing today. Thus, they refuse in these matters to take the Bible as our example to follow in dealing with error and false teachers today.

ACCUSATIONS MADE AND PROVEN TO BE TRUE

Beginning several years ago, we began making public accusations against Dave Miller, charging him with being a false teacher. This began at least as early as 1997 when I asked Dub McClish to review elder re-evaluation/reaffirmation (show the error of it and refute it) for the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL lectureship book and in his lectures that year. In his 1997 review, brother McClish examined the sermon Dave Miller preached for the Brown Trail congregation and their implementation of this error back in 1990. When Brown Trail practiced this error again in 2002, brother McClish was editor of *The Gospel Journal* and ran an article by Marvin Weir exposing this error. The theme of that issue was “The Change Agent Movement” and it was widely praised by faithful brethren. Although brother Miller was in the process of moving to work with Apologetic Press (hereafter AP) when the Brown Trail congregation again practiced it in 2002, he continued to be a member of the Brown Trail church. During these times, no one seemed to be in the least bit bothered by the accusations against Dave Miller as being a false teacher because of the error he willingly espoused, defended, and in which he participated. If they were bothered by the accusations, they certainly kept their displeasure to themselves.

However, things changed! In 2005 the sins of the director of AP (where Dave Miller worked) caught up with him. Brother Bert Thompson had to resign from AP. Many brethren then went into a mode of protecting and saving AP as some type of work that must survive no matter what. Sixty men agreed to allow their names to be used in a “Statement of Support” for AP. But AP named the same false teacher Dave Miller to be its executive director. With these events, certain brethren who had no problem with the accusations against Dave Miller were forced then to defend him and attack those who continued doing what they had been doing for a number of years—exposing and refuting Miller and his errors.

ACCUSATIONS MADE BUT NO ATTEMPT MADE TO PROVE THEM

Some have made accusations against those of us who have exposed Dave Miller. *However, simply because accusations are made against anyone does not make the accusations true!* Although we have provided ample evidence of the false teachings of Dave Miller, we have also called upon those who have made accusations against us to provide the evidence proving their accusations. For example, Keith Mosher, in answer to a question regarding the accusations made against Dave

Miller and if MSOP supported him, said:

I teach logic, and this is the kind of question that says, “Have you stopped beating your wife?” It doesn’t matter what we say; somebody’s going to write about us. I’ve been preaching for 42 years, brethren, and I stand right where I stood 42 years ago. And my friends will believe that, and my enemies won’t, but these people are as vile a group, and I do mean vile, as I have ever read after in my life. I have never seen the kind of attitude they have.

He also stated, “If you’re going to believe some of these publications, you’re going to have a problem because those brethren are lying to you.” Mosher made these statements in the 2006 West Kentucky Lectureship. In the August 2007 issue of *Defender*, we stated to brother Mosher:

It is very easy to get up in a friendly environment and make accusations against someone. It is another matter to prove the accusations. I am presenting a challenge to brother Mosher to document and prove any lies *Defender* has printed about Dave Miller!

To this date brother Mosher has not even made an attempt to prove his accusations made against those of us who have proven the accusations we have made against Dave Miller. (*Brother Mosher, the challenge is still open for you to prove the accusations you made! I do not expect him to attempt to prove them because he cannot prove them.*)

UNPROVEN ACCUSATIONS FROM THE WEST COAST

Now we have another brother who is making accusations against us. Brother Wayne Jackson wrote to brother Doug Post the following and we quote:

I know Dave Miller very well and I believe he has been misrepresented quite maliciously. I am convinced that he holds no position on the eldership, or on the marriage “intent” matter, that is contrary to the Scriptures, nor to that which our brethren have entertained for many years. There is a small clique who have a personal grudge against Dave, and they have a mediocre group of disciples who mindlessly walk in lock-step with them. Dave has not “repented” of anything in connection with the false accusations made against him to my knowledge.

Brother Jackson makes several accusations, yet offers no proof. He asserts that Dave Miller “has been misrepresented.” If he has been misrepresented, then certainly that misrepresentation is wrong and sinful.

Thus, as is the case with any and all misrepresentations, correction needs to be made. Jackson's statement regarding Miller is in the context of Miller's position on the eldership and his marriage "intent" doctrine. Just as we have challenged brother Mosher to prove the lies he claims, *we call upon brother Jackson to prove that brother Miller has been misrepresented regarding these matters.*

Then, he boldly asserts that we have done this "quite maliciously." *Malicious* is defined to be "characterized by malice; intending or intended to do harm." *Malice* is defined as "the intention or desire to do evil; ill will." *Will brother Jackson prove that those who have exposed Miller's false teachings have done so with malice?* If I know my heart, there is no malice intended, but a desire to stand for Truth and the Lord's church as we oppose and all error that stains the beautiful bride of Christ. Maybe brother Jackson thinks he is omniscient, knowing the hearts of others. Apparently he must consider himself such because he also says we "have a personal grudge against Dave." Again, brother Jackson, can you prove (not just make accusations) that I have, or anyone else who has, exposed brother Miller has "a personal grudge against Dave"? Do you not know that you are obligated before God and those you accuse to prove your accusations (1 The. 5:21)? You must know my heart better than I do, because (if I know my heart) I have no personal grudge against him. This is a matter of Truth as opposed to error.

In derogatory terms, brother Jackson labels all those who oppose Miller as mindless. Is it not possible that someone can look at evidence and come to the conclusion that Dave Miller is a false teacher? Please do not simply accept what we say about Dave Miller! We do not desire anyone to blindly follow anyone or anything. Surely brother Jackson does not desire for anyone to follow his comments without him proving his case to be true. Instead, closely examine the evidence. Then follow what the evidence proves. That approach to any matter is right and cannot be wrong, even though in doing so some will falsely accuse you of walking "mindlessly" in lock-step with others.

Brother Jackson said we have made "false accusations." Brother Jackson, have you looked at the evidence? Have you examined the review of Miller's sermon and Brown Trail's actions that Dub McClish wrote that first appeared in the 1997 Bellview Lectureship book *Leadership?* (The material in that chapter was also delivered at the Florida School of Preaching Lectureship in 2001.) Has he examined the material I presented in the Spring Church of Christ *Contending For The Faith* Lectureship in 2010? Brother Jackson, have you listened to the recording of Dave Miller's

sermon? Have you examined the four forms that were handed out to the Brown Trail members regarding their elder re-evaluation/reaffirmation? We certainly welcome brethren to examine the evidence! Do not take our word for it. *Brother Jackson, we have not made "false accusations" against brother Dave Miller.* Have we made accusations against brother Miller? Absolutely! However, the accusations we have made against him are true.

Brother Jackson wrote the following regarding Miller:

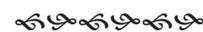
I am convinced that he holds no position on the eldership, or on the marriage 'intent' matter, that is contrary to the Scriptures, nor to that which our brethren have entertained for many years.

Either brother Jackson has not considered the available evidence or he is in agreement with the false positions of Dave Miller. Thus, we state to him: Since you are convinced of these matters, are you willing to sign a proposition regarding them so you can defend them in public debate? Others have lost any backbone they may have had when challenged to defend what Dave Miller preached and what Brown Trail practiced resulting from his sermon. Dave Miller himself will not defend it in an honest, open, public debate; are you willing to do so, brother Jackson? We stand ready and willing to oppose the practice in a 4-night public debate (I know you have publicly debated others regarding what they believe, so why not sign a proposition regarding this subject). If you are not willing to engage in a public four night debate on this matter (you would be defending what Dave Miller preached and Brown Trail practiced), then we are also ready to engage you in a written debate on the subject. Either way brother Jackson, will you have enough courage to defend these practices or do you expect brethren to simply be a "group of disciples who mindlessly walk in lock-step with" you?

HAS MILLER REPENTED OR NOT?

Since we are so often told by Miller's defenders that brother Miller has repented of his teaching regarding the errors discussed in this article, how is it that brother Jackson states he (Miller) has not repented? I do wish these brethren would make up their mind—has he repented or not? You brethren really need to get your act together on this.

—4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, Florida 32526



The wise carry knowledge as a watch—not for display, but for personal use.

Christians, saying:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they wish feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter. 2:1-3).

Also, in the same vein and with the same urgency the apostle John wrote, **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).**

This young prophet, so faithful in discharging his obligation to God in the matter of Jeroboam, now succumbs to a lie told him by one he should have been able to look to for exemplary conduct and encouragement in his faithful service to God. Thus, we should learn that when we put our trust in people, even brethren, to the point of not verifying or proving their reports or teaching, we are food for Satan’s table as was this young prophet. As Peter wrote, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).**

WHAT HAD THE OLD PROPHET DONE?

Have you ever wondered why God sent a prophet from Judah to cry against the wickedness of Jeroboam’s ways in his newly formed northern kingdom of Israel when the Scriptures reveal that, **“there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel” (vs 11)?** One is not being presumptive to conclude that the old prophet knew what the Law of Moses taught concerning idols and the correct worship of God under the Mosaic economy. Had the old prophet failed to see the pressing need to speak **“against the altar in the word of the Lord” (vs. 2)?** Had he blinded himself to the departures from the Law that Jeroboam had decreed? Also, did he not know the consequences of departing from God’s law? Maybe he, as some brethren have espoused regarding certain errors today, arbitrarily decided that although Jeroboam had violated the teaching of the Law of Moses, Jeroboam’s sins did not warrant creating all sorts of trouble by publicly, strongly, consistently, and steadfastly exposing and refuting them—especially when such actions would bring trouble to him. Was it the case that he was a coward, fearing what would happen to him if he spoke out boldly and publicly against the apostasy Jeroboam had authorized and carried out (vs. 4a)? Is it possible that preceding the events involving the young prophet’s public denunciation of Jeroboam’s sins that the old prophet had spoken against the king’s apostasy? Could it be that in his work among the people the old prophet had grown weary in well doing in speaking against Jeroboam and, therefore, had ceased his opposition to Je-

roboam’s errors sometime before the young prophet came to Bethel (Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:3)? Is it possible that the old prophet feared the loss of friends, income, etc., if he publicly opposed Jeroboam’s sins?

Furthermore, having invited the young prophet to visit in his home and having heard from the young man of God the reason he could not accept his invitation (vs. 17), why did the old prophet brazenly lie to the young man in order to get him to accept his invitation (vs. 18)? Did he not care that the young man must suffer the consequences of his disobedience to God—in this case his believing and obeying a lie? Perhaps it was the case that the faithful conduct of the young prophet forced the old prophet to face the fact that he no longer possessed the love he once had for God and Godly things; that he had lost the burning desire to preach the whole counsel of God and confront any and all error, no matter his personal cost (Psa. 119:104,128, Acts 17:16, 17). By the great and faithful work done by the young prophet, could it be that the old prophet felt the prick of a guilty and shamed conscience? In the very presence of apostasy, had the old prophet sought to save his life by remaining silent? Had he digressed to the pitiable state of lying in the name of God in order to stay in favor with Jeroboam? Had lying become so commonplace with him that he had no pangs of conscience when he lied to the young prophet in order to achieve what he desired? Whatever the case with the old prophet, why would he resort to a lie in order to persuade the young prophet to come with him?

We cannot know the answers to the previous questions for the Bible does not reveal them to us. But, we do know that God used the old liar to rebuke the young prophet for allowing himself to be deceived and, thus, disobey God. In doing so, the old prophet reminded him that he must suffer the consequences of his sins. Indeed, following the death of the young man, the old prophet stated that he knew the young man had sinned in believing and obeying the lie he originated and by which he deceived the young prophet (1 Kin. 14:20-32). No wonder we have so many warnings in the Bible admonishing us not to be deceived (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; Eph. 4:14; 5:6; 2 The. 2:3; 2 John:7).

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Let us notice some valuable lessons found in this tragic Old Testament account that are profitable to us in our conduct in the church (Col. 3:17; Rom. 15:4). *Among other things, this account teaches us that some elderly religious people, even some long-term preachers, elders, etc., under given circumstances and situations are not beyond lying to get their way with others.* In a culture and religion that highly respected and honored age, experience, and the wisdom that should come with many years of faithful service to God, did the old prophet use his influential position to take advantage of the young prophet’s respect for him? *We do not have to know the reason the old prophet lied to the*

young prophet to know that he did have a reason for doing so. Moreover, the reason that was behind the old prophet's lie was so important to him that it motivated him not to care about the consequences for lying to the young man and the consequences the young prophet must suffer for believing and obeying his lie.

Are we so Biblically ignorant, or so weak in faith, or so naive that we think some church members today will not lie to their brethren? Today, do we really think that those brethren who allow themselves to be deceived into disobeying God will escape punishment? Also, if this old prophet did not care about being punished for telling a lie, or care about the young prophet being punished for believing and obeying his lie, why do we think that certain brethren today will not conduct themselves toward their brethren as did the old prophet toward the young prophet? Surely these are some of the lessons God intended us to learn and apply to our lives that we might remain faithful to Him.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REHOBOAM AND THE YOUNG PROPHET

It is interesting to remember that Rehoboam rejected the counsel of his older and wiser advisors to follow the council of the younger, inexperienced, and less wise men with whom he grew up. The young men's foolish advice the King followed and it brought hurt to all of God's people at that time and far into their future (1 Kin. 12:6-11). But in the case herein studied the young prophet listened to and was persuaded by an old prophet. However, simply being an old man's message did not mean that his message was truthful. The young man received the old man's message to his own hurt. Thus, because one is chronologically old does not guarantee that person's message to be truthful or wise.

We must not overlook an important difference in the case of Rehoboam and his acceptance of the advice of his young advisors, and the case of the young prophet believing and obeying the old prophet's lies. Please keep in mind that one of the obligations of the king was to keep the unity of the kingdom through his faithful adherence to God's Word and making very sure that the affairs of the kingdom and the conduct of the people were directed only by God's Word. Indeed, the king was to have his own copy of God's Word. Clearly, God expected him to study and know it (Deu. 17:18-20; Please note the good example of King Josiah in 2 Kin 22:8-13; 2 Chr. 34:20ff).

Rehoboam had two options from which to chose by which he could discharge his obligation to keep the unity of the kingdom—(1) the advise of the old men, or (2) the council of the young men. He was to chose the most expeditious (advantageous) option (in this case advice) through which he would discharge this obligation to God for the good of the kingdom. Which option was the most expeditious (advantageous) for Rehoboam to employ in discharging said obligation? Was the most expeditious option (1) the

advise of the older men, or (2) the advice of the younger men? Rehoboam chose the advice of the young men. Their advice did not expedite the discharging of his kingly obligation—the preservation of the unity of Israel. *Please note that Rehoboam's choice was in the area of options, but not obligation.* He had the obligation to preserve the unity of Israel, but the question was, "How was he going to discharge that obligation?" Sadly, the option Rehoboam chose did not expedite his kingly obligation to keep Israel united.

However, in the case of the young prophet and the old prophet of 1 Kings 13, we are not dealing with optional matters. We are dealing with obligatory matters—in this case *the authorized prohibition (obligation) God placed upon the young prophet through His Word and the obligation God placed upon the young prophet to return by a different route from the way he traveled in his journey to Bethel* (vss.8-10, 16, 17). When the young man believed and obeyed the lie of the old prophet, he violated a God-given obligation that he was to faithfully discharge without any addition, subtraction, or alteration of it. He violated what he was authorized/obligated before God to do (1 John 3:4; Col. 3:17).

CONCLUSION

Whatever his reason for doing so, the old prophet lied to the young prophet and God executed the young prophet because he believed and obeyed that lie (1 Kin. 13:20-24). Clearly, because brethren today are preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, editors, college presidents/professors, preacher training school administrators/instructors or, for that matter, any church member who disseminates information, does not mean they are beyond telling lies in order to get their way! Yes, some brethren have lied, do lie, and will continue to lie in order to keep another's fellowship, friendship, financial contribution, admiration, promotion, and about any thing else they think will magnify, extol, and advance their cause before the church.

Many hundreds of years after the Old Testament account of the two prophets studied in this treatise, Luke gives us the account of Ananias and Sapphira—the husband and wife Jerusalem church of Christ members who conspired to lie and did so before the apostle Peter (Acts 5:1-10). Had they never heard about the old and young prophet of 1 Kings 13? If they knew of them, they learned nothing beneficial to their spiritual well-being from that account—and Old Testament account written for the spiritual benefit of all Christians then, now, and until the Lord returns.

That being the case with them, why do some seem to find it difficult to believe that certain church members today—yes, even and especially those who are reputed to be "somewhat"—will lie as a means to justify the end they seek? Have we also failed to learn from these Old and New Testament accounts, as well as the specific teaching of the Bible concerning deception and lying? How is it that some fail to see that God punishes liars and those who allow them-

selves to be deceived by them. Furthermore, are we blind to the fact that such sinners can and do occupy places of leadership in the Lord's church? When church members about whom Paul wrote, "**who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person)**" (Gal. 2:6), commit sin, their "**somewhat**" status must not stop us from faithfully performing our duty to God concerning such sinners. This means rebuking their sins as publicly as they were

committed, as we plead with them by the mercies of Christ to repent in as public a fashion as their sins were committed. Moreover, when they persistently and obstinately refuse to repent, but instead attempt to justify their disobedience to God, this too must be publicly noted and kept before the Lord's church as long as they refuse to repent of their sins. *This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong, "some-what" brethren, whomever they may be, notwithstanding.*

—David P. Brown, Editor



SOBERING SOUNDS

"WE MAKE HIM A LIAR"

Charles Pogue

Among others, the following facts are presented us in 1 John 1:6-10: (1. God is light. (2. If we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another. (3. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. (4. If we confess our sins He will forgive us. (5. If we say we have no sin we make Him a liar. *How, one asks, does one make God a liar by claiming to have no sin?* It is God, His very nature, and His Law that determines what is sin. If one does a thing that is contrary to God's His law (1 John 3:4), yet claims he has not sinned, he is asserting that what God has said is sin is, in reality, not sin, therefore accusing God of being a liar. That cannot be, because it is impossible for God to lie (Tit. 1:2).

Why, then, would one (particularly a child of God) who has committed sin, deny that he has sinned? John clearly expresses one reason in the above context: *the Word of God is not in him*. It goes without saying, if one asserts sin is not sin when the Word of God says it is, clearly God's Word is not in him. Another reason is found in a prerequisite to confession—humility. Amidst a world that focuses on self-esteem, claims truth is subjective, and promotes the idea of "you are okay, I am okay" humility is becoming an increasingly rare commodity. However, as part of the new man, we are to put on humility (Col. 3:12). One who rises up against God, by claiming he has not sinned, has cast forth part of his spiritual clothing, and stands before God exposed as arrogant and full of pride.

God said of Israel of old,

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chr. 7:14).

In order for God's children to receive forgiveness of sin, they must humble themselves, which calls for admitting that

sin is sin, turning from it, and praying. *Watch out for old Mr. Pride!* Here he comes planting the thoughts of "I didn't do it" or, "Yes, I did it" *but* there is nothing wrong with it. Pride may even turn the guilty one into a liar who claims he did not do it at all when in actuality he did.

Whatever happened to humility? Did some lose it when backed into a corner by their guilt? Then from their corner they chose to defend their actions, only later to find themselves even farther from God and denying some other sin to be sin, and, thus, embracing that too. Did they, for the sake of friends or acquaintances, deny that sin is sin, or deny it has been committed, and thus not only fail to receive God's forgiveness for themselves, but also, stand in the way of humility and forgiveness on the part of another? Sin is serious business, so is the humility required to confess it, bend the knee in prostration, and lift the pleading voice to the Almighty on high.

Though Jesus did no sin nor was guile in His mouth (1 Pet. 2:22), yet He remains the ultimate example of humility. He did not count equality with God a thing to be so held on to so much that He would not take upon Himself humanity and live among us (Phi. 2:7). That humility led Him to the cross where in obedience to His Father, in humility, He sacrificed Himself for us (vs. 8). But just before Jesus faced the mob, the illegal trials, and the humiliation of dying as the lowest of thieves, He set a supreme and timeless example of humility by washing the apostles' feet (John 13:5). If Jesus, who knew no sin, could humble Himself to the extent of doing the task of a servant, when He was really Lord of all (and He did), why do brethren deny or defend the wrong they commit rather than humbling themselves before God and seeking His forgiveness? Pride is a robber and thief, depriving men of humbleness of mind, the forgiveness of God,

and ultimately a mansion among mansions, while filling the pitiful void of character with the arrogance of conceit.

One other reason men will deny their sin, thus having it remain, is one's standing among others they hold in high regard—"If I admit I've done wrong, I'll lose my standing among brethren." There he is, old Mr. Pride rearing his ugly head once again. Hopefully, we can have higher regard for the Truth and our brethren than that! If you have sinned, and your brethren are what they ought to be, they will fellowship in the joy of heaven over the sinner who has repented, not think less of you. Who has the respect of his fellows, the man who denies he has sinned when his loved ones know he has, or the man who confesses his wrong under the same circumstances? It is the one who shows the strength of character and the lowliness of mind to confess his wrong and seek God's mercy.

Who is a weak man? Is it the one who admits it when he has sinned, or the one who denies it? Is the humble man, the one who confesses his sin, or the one who accuses God

of being a liar by denying that sin is sin? Oh, that those who have lifted themselves up with pride after the semblance of the Prince of Tyrus, falsely painting themselves in the frame of perfect beauty, would humble themselves as Saul of Tarsus did when confronted with his sins. Why will they persist in their sins all the time portraying their position as invincible when they are the mere antithesis of invincibility? Would to God they would bow the knee to the Almighty, mourning for and repenting of their sins that separate them from God and fractures the blessed fellowship with those who care for nothing else but the salvation of men's souls. But whether such brethren humble themselves before God, repenting of their sins or not, we have our duty to God to be humble and continue to submit to the New Testament principles of Godly conduct.

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SOFT-PEDAL JOURNALISM

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

Personalities in journalism, which means naming teachers of error along with systems of error, are not any violation of courageous, dignified, religious journalism. Naming the men who teach error and practice deception in religion, even in the church, "can be done in a courteous and Christian manner," but it should be done.

To talk and write of courageous, dignified, courteous methods of religious journalism is to deal only in broad generalities. For some of our old landmarks as Gospel papers to recede from former drastic policies and retreat behind the verbiage of carefully worded resolutions of editorial committees to restrain the powers of pens, is a keen disappointment to many of us who have looked to these papers to take the lead in a major fight, without generalities, relentless offensives against false movements and the men who promote them.

Whether some "temptation or scheme of intimidation" has "seduced" and "provoked" the editors and publishers to modify policies we cannot say, but it is obvious that something has caused them to seek retrenchment. Our only point here is that it is no time to be saying pretty platitudes and dealing in generalities. We are in a fight for the Truth and the cannon fire cannot cease until the enemies of the church stack arms.

Calling names of false teachers and their aides and sympathizers is neither undignified nor discourteous, because Paul did it, and he was courteous, dignified and educated. He said, "**Demas forsook me, having loved this present world.**" Again he said that Hymenaeus and Philetus had shipwrecked their faith and were overthrowing the faith of others by their theory of the resurrection and he wrote it down in the New Testament (a rather dignified book) that he had turned those brethren of his over to Satan. He clashed with Barnabas upon one occasion and withstood Peter to his face and rebuked him publicly. Neither incident ruined the church, nor marred the dignity of the New Testament. He further said that Alexander the coppersmith did him much evil and declared that the Lord would reward him for what he did. Paul did not seem to covet the kind of reward he intimated Alexander would get. He told a perverter of the Truth one time that he was full of guile and villainy, called him the son of the devil, and asked him if he ever intended to quit perverting the way of the Lord.

When a paper develops better manners than the New Testament and a preacher becomes more dignified than the apostles, neither is worth anything to the defense of the Truth nor to the cause of Christ.

—Deceased

RAT POISON

Donald E. Davis

Recently I approached an area preacher concerning the featured speaker of a men's retreat he was coordinating. The speaker was to be a brother whose teaching and book on marriage, divorce and remarriage is erroneous according to Scripture. The brother in question was reputed to be an eloquent speaker and very knowledgeable.

The preacher, whose eldership is responsible for bringing this false teacher to the area, assured me that "he would not speak on marriage, divorce and remarriage ... and that he was coming." He was to speak on "how to lead people to Christ," as if this could solve the problem.

It is not enough that a man whose teachings are plainly erroneous on one doctrine says the "right thing" most of the time. Much, in fact, most of what a false teacher says may be true. Billy Graham is a good example. *However, rat poison usually is at least 98% good grain; it is the 2% poison that kills every time.* His accuracy in an isolated engagement is one thing, but what he may say in private conversations, or an examination of the overall slant of his teaching is quite another matter.

GIVING CREDIBILITY TO FALSE TEACHERS

The real danger of such a false teacher being afforded a public opportunity to speak is that it gives him credibility and respectability before innocent and often immature brethren who may be overwhelmed and deceived. Such is allowing brethren to sip deadly poison. (cf. Tit. 1: 10-11).

The most tragic thing is that elderships and preachers allow this to happen and be put on the spot, rather than putting the speaker on the spot as rightfully should be the case. To insist that the Truth be taught unflinchingly in love is not legalism (Eph. 4:11-16). It is acting from love. The struggle for sound doctrine is often very painful, but is a labor of love for Truth and people; a failure here is Satan's delight. Some "issues" are for sound doctrine (1 Tim. 6:3-4).

Within our brotherhood, whatever has happened to the love (agape) to "test the spirits"? (1 John 4: 1-6). Have we drifted so far from the Truth that we apply this exclusively to "radical denominational teachers"—and this seldom uniformly? God never intended that love (or a current brotherhood facsimile of it, more like an *esprit de corps*) cover or ignore even one false teacher or his teaching (Gal. 2:4-15). In fact, mature love demands that they be identified and exposed by name, at least to those who have the need to know. (Cf. Acts 20:28-32; 1 Tim. 1: 18-20, 2 Tim. 4: 14-15).

IS IT REALLY LOVE?

Do we love the brethren if we allow them to sip the

deadly poison of false doctrine? Our first love must be to the Truth and sound doctrine (John 8:31-32). A form of it cannot save. Jesus prayed for unity based upon Truth, and not for a union palatable to most (John 17: 17-21; cf 2 Tim. 4: 1-5).

One hears the phrase "**we be brethren**" used a lot today (Gen. 13:8). No doubt much division has been unnecessary. Without question a great challenge before the church always will be learning to live together as brethren. However, there are brethren we cannot fellowship as faithful brethren and still be faithful to God (cf 1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 4:14-15; 1 John 2:18-19; 4: 1-6; Rev. 2: 12-29). Neither their actions nor dispositions can be tolerated. Unless we expose them, then we are approving their false teaching.

We cannot show love and allow one intentionally to spread spiritual death, however subtle. Truth has no middle ground; it cannot be known by compromise or fabricating doctrine we can "live with." It ought to be evident that the simplicity of the Truth does not always appeal to the intellectual pride of some brethren (2 Cor. 11 :3; cf. 1 Cor. 2: 1-5).

SOME LESSONS OF PRINCIPLE

Let us consider some lessons of principle found both in the Old and New Testaments (Rom. 15:4, cf. Jos. 24:31; Jude 2:10).

1. God's people have never remained faithful to Him for very long.
2. Most of God's people always have been unwilling to accept the simple authority of His written Word for very long.
3. Most of God's people always have been unwilling faithfully to proclaim His message, or allow it to be faithfully proclaimed for very long.
4. Most of God's prophets (preachers today) always have been willing to say about whatever the people want to hear, or that seems to the advantage of their security.
5. Most of God's people always have done just about whatever they wanted to.
6. We can be deceived by thinking that the church today is an exception. All warning in the New Testament is for eternal vigilance (cf. 2 Peter 1 :5-11).

The time is far past when we ought to start applying these principles to the churches of Christ and not merely the denominations. If we do not, we will be a denomination.

The New Testament "**thoroughly furnishes**" the

church to discern false brethren and their doctrine (2 Tim. 3: 16-17). Are we no longer able or willing to do this? Love or “a grace-oriented church” cannot excuse error not being identified, exposed, and biblically dealt with. God’s people are to be distinct because of their unalterable loyalty to the

simplicity of His Word (Titus 2:11-14). We must serve God and His way only (Rom. 10:1-3).

—Deceased



LEAVE IT TO DEAVER (PART 1)

Gary W. Summers

For the past sixteen years many faithful brethren have been opposing what has come to be called “the Deaver doctrine.” It first surfaced in a debate that Mac Deaver had with Marion Fox in 1994 and has been evolving ever since. The position emerging from that discussion was the subject of succeeding debates, the last of which occurred ten years ago. Several brethren have dealt with certain aspects of this false teaching at various lectureships, and the *Gospel Journal*, when edited proficiently by Dub McClish, devoted an entire issue in February of 2002 to exposing the various fallacies of Deaver’s ideology. The *Defender, Contending for the Faith*, and a few other papers likewise devoted articles to this heresy during that same month.

In 2007, Deaver published what is purported to be the latest version of his beliefs, without which no one could understand his position. He assured this writer that, unless one had read this volume, he would not fully comprehend his view and thus would be misrepresenting him. Therefore, not cheerfully, but grudgingly and of necessity, this disadvantaged scribe purchased a copy and now (with all of the wonderful knowledge not heretofore possessed) is ready to examine and comment upon *The Holy Spirit (Center of Controversy—Basis of Unity)* by Mac Deaver.

The very first chapter contains many errors, but the main concern of this examination will be chapter two, “The Gift of the Holy Spirit—Its Meaning.” This topic has been debated for more than 100 years. Entire chapters have been written on the meaning of the phrase from Acts 2:38—and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Only Mac Deaver could have the temerity to cover all three positions in ten pages and act as if anyone who would possibly disagree with him is unscholarly. Leave it to Deaver and his arrogance to think he has thoroughly analyzed everything pertaining to the subject and drawn the correct conclusions in so short a space.

The approach of these articles will be to deal with the shortcomings of this chapter. Later comments made in the book, if any, that relate to this topic will not be addressed here so that the analysis can be as brief as possible. Some are

intensely interested in this subject, but others are bored by it. It is important, however, that we understand this phrase—what it means—and what it does not mean.

ACTS 2:38 AND 10:45

The purpose of Mac’s second chapter is to determine the meaning of “**the gift of the Holy Spirit**” as found in Acts 2:38. Deaver rightly says that the only other time this expression is found in the entire New Testament is in Acts 10:45. “And there the reference is indisputably to the Holy Spirit Himself (see vs. 44)” (27). On the basis of this one verse, then, Mac and many others conclude that the Holy Spirit has given Himself as the gift in both passages. How simple things are for Deaver. It only took him four sentences to explain what (apparently unenlightened) brethren are still wondering about. After repeating that the phrases in both verses are identical, Mac hurriedly concludes: “This much is settled. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit” (27). What an unsettling remark! This hasty bit of analysis cannot go unchallenged.

First, Acts 10:44 does say that the Holy Spirit fell on all who were listening to Peter preach the Word, but the gift of the Holy Spirit they received was not the Holy Spirit personally. Notice that immediately after saying that “**the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also,**” the text continues: “**For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God**” (Acts 10:46). We know from 1 Corinthians 12-14 that speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift given by the Spirit. The text in Acts 10 tells us that the Jews who were with Peter were astonished because these Gentiles had received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And how did they know that the Holy Spirit had fallen (a figure of speech) upon them? They heard them speak in tongues. Thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit Himself, personally—but in this instance the ability to be able to speak in tongues. It may have dawned upon the reader that what was settled for Mac is not at all settled when looking at the text.

Second, the Holy Spirit falling upon them, in light of

the next two verses, is a metonymy of the cause (Dungan 271) where the Holy Spirit stands for what He has imparted to them—i.e., a spiritual gift. The same thing occurs later in Acts 19:5-6. Paul baptized twelve men who had only known the baptism of John. “*And when Paul had laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*” Once again, the Spirit came upon them, and people could observe this fact by the spiritual gifts that they then showed. In both cases, these two groups received a miraculous gift—a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Third, according to Mac’s logic, if the phrase, the gift of the Holy Spirit, is only found one other time in the New Testament, and it refers to a miraculous gift being given, then it must mean the same thing in Acts 2:38. So, leaving it to Deaver—logic, the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 that Peter promised to the people was that of a miraculous gift. If Mac were to concoct a syllogism, it would probably read something like this.

1. If the same author uses the same phrase twice in a book of the New Testament, then whatever the phrase means in one context, it means in the other, also.

2. Luke uses the same phrase in Acts 10:45 that he uses in Acts 2:38.

3. Therefore, what the gift of the Holy Spirit means in Acts 10:45 it must also mean in Acts 2:38.

Although the form of the syllogism is valid, the first premise cannot be proven to be true. But if it were true, it would not help Mac because it would establish that Luke was referring to a miraculous gift in Acts 2:38. Oddly enough, however, Mac does not hold that view. The fact is, though, that he must either adopt that view or give up his argument. “That much is settled.”

“THE GIFT OF GOD”

The problem with making an argument of this type is that two usages of a phrase is not enough of a sampling to be certain of drawing the correct conclusion. Had the phrase been used five or ten times, with the same obvious meaning each time, then one would have a case, but twice is not necessarily conclusive. Take, for example, the phrase, the gift of God. Although it is found 6 times in the English, the expression is found only twice when the Greek word translated “gift” is *dorea*. In Acts 8:20, it clearly refers to the miraculous.

Simon the sorcerer had become a Christian in response to Philip’s preaching. Peter and John went to Samaria and prayed that these new Christians “might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They

had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:15-17). Observations about this text should prove helpful.

First, Peter and John were sent to Samaria for a specific purpose—to give these brethren the Holy Spirit. They did not automatically receive the Holy Spirit upon being baptized. Both here and in Acts 19, those who had been baptized needed to have an apostle lay hands on them to receive the Spirit. *Second*, when they received the Holy Spirit (metonymy again), such was visible to others present. In Acts 10 and 19, people observed the recipients exercising a spiritual gift. Although neither speaking in tongues nor prophecy is mentioned in Acts 8, it is evident that Simon saw some evidence that they had received the Spirit because he wanted to buy the power to do what Peter and John had done (Acts 8:18-19).

Peter chastised Simon severely because he thought “**the gift of God could be purchased with money!**” (Acts 8:20). What is the gift of God? It refers to the ability that Peter and John had as apostles to impart a spiritual gift (the Holy Spirit) to Christians. Simon wanted to buy that ability, that gift. Certainly, this *dorea* (gift) of God refers to a miraculous ability.

However, the other time the expression occurs is in John 4:10. Jesus said to the woman at the well, “**If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.**” What is “**the gift of God**” here? It is the same expression in the Greek as in Acts 8:20, but it is certainly not the miraculous ability to lay hands on someone and impart a gift. Neither is it a miraculous gift; Jesus may be referring to Himself (He certainly is God’s gift to us—John 3:16), to the salvation that comes through Him, or both. The same expression is used, but the meanings of both are different. Likewise, the gift of the Holy Spirit has two different meanings.

ACTS 10:45

Deaver knows that his argument on Acts 10 and Acts 2 is fraught with difficulties. Therefore, he tries to head off the obvious conclusion that the gift of Acts 2 is miraculous (27). Of course, it only stands to reason that it would be, but he argues that the only point of similarity he is concerned about is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit, whether or not a miraculous gift is involved. He asserts what he cannot prove, and he does so by failing to study the entire context and refusing to acknowledge common figures of speech. He repeats that no one can question his conclusion, but it has

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already been questioned—and successfully at that. Merely repeating a point (which lacks evidence) cannot replace careful exegesis.

THE PROMISE

Mac next turns his attention to the word promise; once again, his analysis is very thin and superficial. His main points are these.

First, Jesus told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father which is explained to be the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5) (28).

Mac has begun this section with a true statement. He could also have included Luke 24:49 in which Jesus also made that statement. Both of these statements were made after Jesus was raised from the dead, the one in Acts being spoken the day of His ascension. But Jesus had promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come upon them on the night of His betrayal. At that time He promised that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come, and when He did, He would bring to remembrance all things whatsoever that Jesus had taught them. He would also guide them into all truth and show them things yet future (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13).

That *first* point holds true, but it does not mean that every time the word promise is used, it refers to that particular promise because God made others that are referenced in Acts 2. The cognate forms of the word promise are used 70 times in the New Testament. Only three times does promise refer to the Holy Spirit being given, and two of those were cited above. Over 50% of the time, the promises made to Abraham are referenced, and that includes the spiritual promise of salvation. The apostles, at the time of the Day of Pentecost, were looking for the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised them, but the nation of Israel was looking for the One through Whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, the message which Peter proclaimed that day.

IN HIS SECOND POINT, MAC MISHANDLES ACTS 2:33.

Second, Peter in his sermon explained that whereas Jesus had gone back to heaven and was exalted by God's right hand, he had received of the Father "**the promise of the Holy Spirit**" which he had poured out, the evidence of which was discernible to the people (Acts 2:32, 33) (28).

While it is true that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit

had been seen by the multitude and, in fact, was responsible for the people gathering together, Peter had already explained (by the time of verse 33) that those things were a fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had written. From verse 22 onward, Peter's intention is to proclaim that Jesus had arisen from the dead—also in keeping with what the Scriptures had taught. The apostle now sets forth two crucial facts: 1) Jesus has been raised from the dead; and 2) He has ascended into heaven to sit on the throne of David. However, as this latter subject has been introduced into the text, it is important to stop and remind ourselves of some crucial details regarding that event.

In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God had Nathan speak to David:

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

This prophecy of Jesus and His kingdom was very much in the minds of the people. Peter explains that Jesus is the Person of the prophecy: "**Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on the throne...**" (Acts 2:30). The people were expecting the Christ to sit on the throne of David. Peter explains that Jesus fulfilled David's prophecy of the resurrection, but now he refers again to what David knew—about the throne and the kingdom. "**Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear**" (Acts 2:33).

What promise of the Holy Spirit did Jesus receive? He was given the throne and the kingdom of David—one of the reasons He was able to endure the cross. Jesus, "**for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**" (Heb. 12:2). The way Mac interprets this verse, when Jesus ascended into heaven, the Father gave Him the Holy Spirit, and He in turn poured Him out on the apostles. This interpretation ignores the significance of what Peter was preaching concerning the resurrection and the ascension into heaven.

Furthermore, it makes the same mistake that Pentecostals do. They are more excited about the Holy Spirit Whom they erroneously imagine gives them spiritual gifts today than about Jesus, the One Who redeemed them from their sins. Mac also thinks that the Holy Spirit and His manifestations on Pentecost are more important than the message concerning Jesus. As Paul taught to the Corinthians, the spiritual gifts were not the important thing. They were inferior to love and would soon disappear anyway. The gifts were to authenticate the Gospel message and to edify the

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church. They were a means to an end—not the end itself.

The rushing mighty wind, the cloven tongues as of fire, and the speaking in tongues likewise were not the message; they were used to call attention to the gospel. The message was that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. He was resurrected and ascended into heaven, where He received the kingdom, the throne of David. As evidence of that unique event, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles. Peter again mentions the exaltation of Christ in verses 34-36. This is not just a day of signs; the crucial thing is the message that the signs were sent to confirm. Leave it to Deaver to miss the significance of the message in Acts 2.

BIZARRE INTERPRETATIONS

The observation has often been made that, when people go overboard on the Holy Spirit, they begin to see every passage through the prism of their newfound theology. They enthusiastically embrace new and even bizarre interpretations in an effort to substantiate their views and export them to others. One example of such unchecked exuberance was that of Todd Deaver at the Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman in 2003. The following is an excerpt from him (as recorded in an article from *Spiritual Perspectives* May 11, 2003):

I just wanted to address the comment about the question, whether or not we should worship the Holy Spirit. I certainly don't claim to have all the answers concerning that, but let me just offer one observation. Possibly, one of the reasons that you don't ever find, in the New Testament, worship being directed specifically to the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is viewed in the New Testament as being within the Christian and helping him to offer it—his worship. For example, in Jude, verse 20, you have a reference to praying in the Holy Spirit. There are several other passages that talk about the same thing.

John 4:24 refers to worshipping in the Spirit. I believe that's the Holy Spirit there. He is in the Christian (1 Cor. 6:19-20), helping us in our worship. He is interceding for us within our hearts (Romans, chapter 8). And so, possibly, how that's supposed to be looked at in the New Testament is that the Holy Spirit is not in heaven receiving our worship but is in our hearts helping us to offer the worship.

In the history of Christianity, probably no one had ever alleged that worshipping God in spirit and in truth (think of all the sermons preached on this passage) referred to worshipping God in the Holy Spirit. Does even one commentary suggest such an interpretation?

Ralph Gilmore, hosting the forum, should have explained the fallacy of the statement (along with the other errors), but instead he said, "Todd, that's a great point." He ought to have said, "Todd, the idea that Jesus was teaching that the Holy Spirit helps us in our worship is totally foreign to the context of the conversation with the woman at

the well." As brethren have pointed out over the centuries, Jesus is talking about Truth and sincerity of attitude (from the heart).

Once one begins to take an unscriptural position, however, everything becomes skewed, and all passages must be re-interpreted to fit the false theory. What Dan Billingsly has done in making all the Scriptures fit his error is precisely what Mac Deaver does with respect to the Holy Spirit. Objectivity in understanding passages of Scripture evaporates.

PROMISES, PROMISES

When Mac Deaver reads Acts 2, all he can see is the Holy Spirit. As already noted, the Holy Spirit had been promised and received on the Day of Pentecost. Certainly, the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled that day, along with the promise made by John and Jesus to the disciples. But that is not the only promise that is in play; Mac however, cannot see the other two. The first, as already mentioned, was the prophecy about Jesus being raised up to sit on David's throne. The second is the promise made to all mankind of salvation and its attendant blessings. Others readily understand these promises as being present in the text.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven, He was exalted to the right hand of God, where He received the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). Leave it to Deaver to, with a wave of the hand, dismiss any interpretation but his. He writes: "The only promise explicitly mentioned as a promise in the whole context is the promise of the Holy Spirit" (28).

The very wording of this sentence indicates that Deaver is aware that other promises are implicitly included, such as the one about Jesus receiving a kingdom when He ascended to the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14). Peter mentions that God had sworn to David that He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne (Acts 2:30). This promise is in the context

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about as strongly as anything could be—without being explicit. When Peter proclaims that the Jesus they crucified is now both Lord and Christ, he is also affirming that Jesus has taken His place at the right hand of God and has begun His reign on David’s throne! Thus, the apostle has brought them to the point of discussing—not the Holy Spirit—but salvation.

Deaver wants us to believe that, when Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit, He received the Holy Spirit Himself—and then in turn poured Him out upon the apostles so they might speak in tongues. Where was it ever promised that Jesus would be given the Holy Spirit when He returned to Heaven? What He was promised (in the Old Testament Scriptures) was that He would receive a kingdom, which He had. Having received that promise, it was time to declare that fact; thus the Holy Spirit was poured out (metaphorically, not literally) upon the apostles in order to gather the multitude together to hear that salvation was now available.

Deaver acts as though the Holy Spirit is more important than salvation being available to all mankind. When the Jewish men were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, they did not ask, “How can we get the Holy Spirit?” They asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Their question is not, “What shall we do to get the Holy Spirit?” Their question is, “What shall we do about the fact that we have crucified the Son of God, whom God has raised up to sit on the throne of David?”

“THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

Peter’s answer is familiar: **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** The two conditions listed in order to receive salvation are easily understood—repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. But what is meant by that promise that Peter gave—of receiving the Holy Spirit? Brethren have generally adopted three views to attempt to explain the phrase. Some have argued that the gift is the Spirit while others contend that the gift is something that the Spirit gives.

An important question to ask is, “What would the multitude have thought when hearing this phrase?” Two basic ideas come to mind: 1) That they would, if baptized, receive the ability to speak in tongues, as they had witnessed earlier (Peter had identified the occurrence as pouring out the Spirit on all flesh); or 2) That they would, if baptized, indeed receive salvation, concerning which the Holy Spirit had prophesied through the writers of the Old Testament.

Mac Deaver, however, specifies four possibilities (all on page 29). The *first* of these is that the multitude believed they would “receive the Spirit with all nine miraculous endowments that characterized the apostles.” Although he rejects this view as what Peter meant, it certainly was not something anyone would have thought. They had only seen

one manifestation of the Holy Spirit at that time and did not know how many gifts the apostles might have possessed.

The *second* meaning that Deaver suggests is that they could receive the Spirit Himself with miraculous power, a la Cornelius. He rejects this option, but the people might have thought this to be a possibility, since they had observed it happen. The *third* option is the same except that the spiritual gift would come by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. Those on Pentecost could hardly have imagined that possibility since they were as yet not familiar with the way it would later be done.

The *fourth* choice is that Peter meant that the people would receive the Spirit Himself but “without accompanying miraculous power but with non-miraculous spiritual power.” What? “This would be supernatural non-miraculous power.” If anyone on the Day of Pentecost would have so understood Peter to mean what Deaver alleges here, he would outrank Einstein. Why would anyone observe a miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit (i. e., speaking in tongues) and conclude that Peter referred to a non-miraculous manifestation of the Spirit? Actually, with the knowledge that the people had at that point and their brief, limited experience, the only option that makes sense is number 2—that they would receive the same thing they had seen in the apostles (and without the laying on of hands).

Mac Deaver rejects this view though, if the gift of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit Himself, it would surely be the one that crowd would have envisioned. He rightly points out that only Cornelius and his family receive what he describes as position #2 and that it was the exception. Of course, students of the Word do not learn that fact until the book of Acts unfolds itself.

Because many brethren hold to position #3, Mac spends four pages refuting that position, after which he affirms that the fourth position is the correct one—the one concerning the non-miraculous indwelling. Up until this point he has not dealt with the possibility of the gift of the Holy Spirit referring to salvation. In fact, he made it clear that there were no other choices. After listing the four options, he asks, “Are there any other possibilities? I think not” (29). Leave it to Deaver to suggest that the four possibilities he sets forth are the only ones that can possibly exist—and then reverse himself. “Before concluding this section, let me mention one other alleged meaning of the expression ‘the gift of the Holy Spirit’ which some preachers have advocated” (34). Well, which is it? Are there four and only four possibilities, or is there another? There is another, and it is one that the crowd would have had in their minds, thus giving it credibility.

SALVATION

Mac hates to stoop to discuss this non-existent option (in his mind). After all, he has already proved his case; why bother to mess up his perfect construct? Concerning the idea

that the gift of the Holy Spirit refers to salvation, he writes: “Given the foregoing explanation, this is false. But let me offer a few comments anyway” (35). He does not seriously examine this view. Why does he not quote someone who has actually written on the subject or comment on a few related Scriptures? Does he not know how to do research? It is much easier to define another’s position in one’s own terms and then discredit it than to let someone who holds that position speak for himself.

Therefore, the position shall be set forth before we look at Mac’s refutation of it. *First*, a summary is in order.

1. The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in various languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance (2:4).

2. Many were appropriately amazed at what they saw and heard, but some mocked, accusing the apostles of being full of new wine (2:12-13).

3. Peter refuted the charge and claimed that what they had observed was what Joel had prophesied (2:15-16). The passage mentions such spiritual gifts as prophecy. Nothing in Joel’s words suggests a gift “without accompanying miraculous power but with non-miraculous spiritual power.”

4. Then Peter begins to preach Jesus, who was attested by God to them “**by miracles, wonders, and signs,**” which they had seen (2:22).

5. They had put Him to death, but He was resurrected (2:23-24).

6. David had spoken of the resurrection (2:24-31).

7. God had sworn to David “**with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne**” (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Acts 2:30).

8. Jesus had been raised up; the apostles were witnesses. Jesus had been highly exalted at the right hand of God (given David’s throne), and the Holy Spirit had poured out the miraculous gift they had observed (2:32-33).

9. Peter quotes Psalm 110:1, a Messianic kingship passage (2:34-35).

10. Peter reaffirms that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, after which the men ask what they should do (2:36-37).

Neither the question nor the answer revolves around the Holy Spirit. The answer is devoted to salvation. God used the Holy Spirit to do something miraculous to gain people’s attention. The purpose, however, was to teach a spiritual message—that of salvation. Jesus had fed 5,000 on one occasion, and they wanted to make him a king, mistaking the sign for what the sign pointed to. The Holy Spirit is prominent in Acts 2—but only as a means to preach the gospel to the people. In answer to their question, Peter mentions repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Does he

mention the gift of the Holy Spirit to reintroduce the subject of the Holy Spirit?

Such is unlikely for two reasons. *First*, everything in verses 38-42 centers on salvation. *Second*, in another passage, one without the prominence of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, the parallel response is also entirely on salvation. However, Acts 2 deserves further examination. Notice verse 39: “**For the promise is to you and your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.**” To what does the promise refer in this verse? Certainly it was not the promise made to David of Christ ruling on his throne. Is it the promise of the Holy Spirit Jesus made to the apostles? No. Does it refer to what Peter just promised about the gift of the Holy Spirit? After having told them how to be saved, did Peter then think it was important to tell them about a gift “without accompanying miraculous power but with non-miraculous spiritual power”? Having broached being saved, would he take an excursion into another subject area, which would possibly only confuse them?

No, it is our contention that the gift of the Holy Spirit here is the same thing as the gift of God in John 4:10—the salvation that comes through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and the blessings that accompany it. Why it is phrased that way may relate to the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who prophesied of the salvation to come all through the ages. Furthermore, salvation (resulting in eternal life) is a gift of God (Rom. 6:23).

Notice too that the promise of salvation is made to all (2:39). Peter said many other things to the people, exhorting them, “**Be saved from this perverse generation**” (2:40). The emphasis is clearly upon salvation. Acts 2:41 does not say, “They that gladly received his word were baptized, and they all received a gift ‘without accompanying miraculous power but with non-miraculous spiritual power.’” It speaks only of salvation and being added to the body of Christ. Among the things in which brethren continued steadfastly in Acts 2:42, there is no mention made of a non-miraculous gift—but rather things that pertain to salvation.

In Acts 13 the references to the Holy Spirit that had to be made on Pentecost are absent. Paul arrives at the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and His post-resurrection appearances (Acts 13:30-31). Then he says: “**And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers**” (13:32). After recounting the resurrection further in light of prophecies, Paul says that “**through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins...**” (13:38). The promise (the glad tidings) is clearly salvation, the forgiveness of sins.

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-Oklahoma-

Porum— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 6, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.387.1429; tgjoriginal@verizon.net.

Evant—Evant Church of Christ, 310 West Brooks Drive, Evant, TX 76525. Office: (254) 471-5705; Jess Whitlock, evangelist (254) 471-5717.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring *Contending for the Faith* Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February and the internet school, Truth Bible Institute. www.churchesofchrist.com.

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