

IT IS TIME FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

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We need a paradigm shift. In other words, we need a change in the patterns and models which govern our thinking, particularly as it relates to the way the natural and supernatural realms impact one another. A number of erroneous mindsets hinder the working of the miraculous in the church, and it is time for a paradigm shift.

1. Rightly discern the origins of good and evil. We need to get it straight who is wearing the white hat and who is wearing the black hat. The devil is bad, and God is good.¹ The devil steals, kills and destroys. God, through Jesus, gives life more abundantly.² When people die, it is not because God took them; God regards death as an enemy.³ Jesus came to destroy the devil's work.⁴ God does not withhold from His children; He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.⁵

2. Connect the natural with the supernatural. We need to understand the close relationship between the natural and spiritual realms. Until the beginning of the scientific age, whenever natural calamity would take place, people would begin to humble themselves before God for they knew that there were underlying spiritual causes. In Psalm 41, David was afflicted, and he assumed that his own sin was the cause of his illness. He prayed, "Heal me, for I have sinned against you." Now that the scientific age is here, we can so explain everything away that we no longer seek out what the underlying spiritual causes might be. We have drawn a line between the spiritual and natural realms that is a much thicker line than what really exists. The line between the spiritual and the natural is actually very thin.

In the Bible, all affliction was associated with the work of the devil, and God's will was to overthrow the devil's oppressive work. The burden of proof rests upon those who would take exception to that. In the Old Testament, when the physical land was afflicted with drought, spiritual causes were considered. Such is the context of 2 Chronicles 7:14—a promise to God's people in times when there has been no rain upon the land: "If my people, who are called by my name, will 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." In response to their humble repentant cry, God would heal the land by sending the rain. Spiritual causes brought drought, and spiritual intervention brought the rain.

¹ James 1:17.

² John 10:10.

³ 1 Corinthians 15:26.

⁴ 1 John 3:8.

⁵ Hebrews 11:6.

When we fail to make a connection between the natural and the supernatural, we run the risk of missing our breakthrough. May we stop making statements like these:

- “Ah, she’s just prone to get sick.”
- “It’s just the flu.”
- “You know, that heart condition just runs in the family.”
- “I guess he just caught a virus.”

No. May we begin humbling ourselves with repentant, worshipful and faith-filled hearts and start trusting God to overthrow the spiritual forces that would want to keep God’s people oppressed and afflicted.

Another aspect of connecting the natural with the supernatural pertains to how God will sometimes use natural and even strange means to accomplish spiritual results. For instance, the prophet Elisha sent a messenger to Naaman telling him to dip seven times in the Jordan River to be healed of his leprosy.⁶ In another instance, Jesus smeared spit on the eyes of a blind man, restoring the man’s sight.⁷

3. Think with the spiritual mind. While our natural thinking processes are a gift from God, limiting our understanding to only what the natural mind can comprehend is a hindrance to accepting and receiving the supernatural. Stop trying to understand spiritual realities with the natural or carnal mind. The Bible says, starting in 1 Corinthians 2:14,

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment:

16 “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.⁸

How does spiritual understanding come to us? A few verses earlier, Paul says,

9 However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”--

10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

The understanding that we need comes supernaturally. It comes by revelation through the Holy Spirit. Back up a little further in chapter two, and Paul tells us why God has chosen to manifest such understanding solely through the Spirit:

1 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

⁶ 2 Kings 5:1-14.

⁷ Mark 8:23; John 9:6.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.

2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.

4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,

5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Here it is clearly stated. God does not want our faith to be based in human reason. Our faith is to rest on God's power.

4. Become like a little child. One day Jesus' disciples came to Him and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He responded by calling a little child. As the child stood before them, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."⁹

Here are three keys for accessing the great things of the kingdom. First, we must be willing to change. Jesus said, "unless you change." Second, we must humble ourselves. Third, we must become like little children. It is this third attitude or action that may require some explanation. What are the characteristics of a child that Jesus might have had in mind? Here are a few to consider:

1. Children are typically known for their simplicity.
2. They usually have a simple ability to trust.
3. They are not sophisticated.
4. They are uncomplicated. At least, they are not as complicated as adults.
5. They are readable.
6. They are open.
7. They are real.
8. They are expressive of wants, needs and emotions.
9. They are teachable.
10. They are curious and eager to explore.
11. They are willing to take risks, unhindered by reason.

Of course, there can be a down side to some of these qualities, but when applied in a kingdom of heaven context, these characteristics open the way to greatness.

5. Stop fearing deception. Nearly every major revival movement I have seen has been accompanied by people who want to issue a "do not be deceived" warning. They are afraid that the supernatural manifestations taking place may actually be false signs and wonders—the devil's work. Now, I have occasionally witnessed demonic activity in the midst of revival, but it has been in the context of individuals being delivered from oppression. The important question

⁹ Matthew 18:1-4.

is this: are they coming or going? As the Spirit of God moves in, things that are not of the Spirit of God are forced out. As John Arnott often said during the Toronto Revival, “Good stuff in. Bad stuff out.”

Consider how irrational this fear can be. A group of people start fasting and praying. They humble themselves, crying out for revival. For months and even years they are asking God for a move of His Spirit. Repentance is taking place, and their hearts are becoming more passionate for Jesus. They start preaching sermons and writing articles about all of this. New songs are being sung that reinforce their godly pursuit. The person and work of Jesus Christ becomes their focus. Their devotion to Scripture has become more evident. Then it happens. A mighty power sweeps in among them. Signs, wonders and miracles start taking place. They claim that it is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but critics start exclaiming, “No, it’s the work of the devil!”

What? It makes no sense. Do you mean to tell me that when God’s people humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their sinful ways, the result of such obedience is going to be a great evil and deception sweeping in upon them? Do you mean to tell me that when the resulting supernatural manifestations are precisely the kinds of things that Jesus promised for His people, that it is actually the work of the devil? Like I said, it makes no sense. It is time to have more faith in God’s ability to bless us than in Satan’s ability to deceive us. In my opinion, these words from the lips of our Lord in Luke 11:13 should bring closure to the matter: “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

6. Discard cessationist thinking. Cessationism embraces the idea that the manifestation of charismatic gifts ceased at the end of the first century apostolic era. Cessationism is false doctrine. God is still at work through the manifestation of charismatic gifts. For instance, many have been taught against tongues, while the Bible teaches, “Do not forbid speaking in tongues.”¹⁰ Many treat prophecies with contempt, while the Bible says not to do so.¹¹ Many have taught that the charismatic gifts ended with the Apostles, yet both the Bible and church history testify otherwise.

This paradigm shift is essential to the faithful fulfillment of Christ’s mission in the earth. What will you now do? Know that God is entirely good. Live according to a worldview that embraces the supernatural. Train yourself to think and understand with your spiritual mind. Reclaim the simplicity of childlike faith. Refuse to allow fear a place in your life—even the fear of deception. Discard the false doctrines that promote a powerless Gospel. Find a community of believers who are passionate in their pursuit of Jesus, and join yourself to those people. It is time to change.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:39.

¹¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:20.