



## HOW GOD CHANGES LIVES UNDERSTANDING MEANS OF GRACE

BY BOB DEWAAY

*“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:41, 42)*

What do the Pope, the Dalai Lama and Donald Whitney have in common? They all promote freestyle spirituality where feeling close to God replaces drawing near to God on His terms. Religious experimentation replaces practices ordained by God and sincerity replaces revealed truth. We will begin with a narrative from the Old Testament and proceed to revealed truth in the New Testament to show that we must come to God in faith on His terms. We cannot trust our spiritual well-being to experimentation.

### Naaman the Syrian Leper

2Kings 5 contains an interesting narrative, where God healed a Syrian pagan of his leprosy. How God worked in this case shows a pattern that is clearly revealed in the New Testament. The Naaman narrative helps us understand how important it is that we know what God has commanded, that we believe His promises, and that we come to Him on His terms. This pattern is largely rejected in the contemporary church in favor of “spiritual disciplines” that were never commanded by God and were dreamt up by spiritual experimentation. We will see why this constitutes rebel-

lion against God's ordained means.

Naaman is introduced in 2Kings 1:1:

*Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper.*

Naaman's problem was something that could not be solved by any ordinary means. But in God's providence, Naaman's wife had a servant girl who was a Hebrew, having been captured by the Syrians. The Lord used this girl in a remarkable way:

*And she said to her mistress, “I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy.” (2Kings 5:3)*

The prophet she referenced was Elisha, a true prophet of God who spoke for God. So Naaman's master, the king of Syria (Aram), generously sent Naaman with lavish gifts for the king of Israel and asked that Naaman be cured of leprosy. The king of Israel reacted nega-

tively, tearing his clothes in lament, thinking that the king of Syria was plotting to destroy him when he was unable to cure Naaman (2Kings 5:5-7). Elisha heard about this and sent word to the king to send Naaman to Elisha to show that he was the prophet of the true God and could cure the leper (2Kings 5:8). So Naaman came to the house of Elisha.

### The Command of God

What happens next is important for our understanding of means of grace. In the case of Naaman, the word for God from Elisha was specific to Naaman, yet it still shows us a pattern that is found in the New Testament. First, there was a command from God that came with a promise from God:

*And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you and you shall be clean.” (2Kings 5:10)*

I will show that this is how God works for His people under the New Covenant as well. God's means must include a command from God from a true spokesperson of God and have a promise attached to it. When God commands us to do something and promises to meet us in that, we can be utterly sure that God will keep His infallible promise.

In Naaman's case, he was offended by *what* God commanded through the prophet:

*But Naaman was furious and went away and said, “Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand*

*over the place, and cure the leper.' Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. (2Kings 5:11, 12)*

Naaman was willing to keep his leprosy rather than obey the terms laid out by God. In his mind, the words of the prophet were absurd and demeaning.

This reveals a fatal flaw in the thinking of many people. We recently witnessed the Pope coming to America. The spectacle was utterly alarming. Masses of people would do anything to get close to the Pope. They deem him a holy man who can help them spiritually if they can only get a glimpse, or better yet, touch him. Naaman was offended that Elisha did not even come out to meet him. Instead, Elisha offered what the Pope in our day does not have to offer: the true command of God with a promise. The Pope does not preach the gospel. Instead he offers himself as some supposed holy man. Others are just as excited about the Dalai Lama who also was in the country. They want a (supposedly) holy man rather than the true Word of God.

## The Promise of God

I think that Elisha's not coming out exposed a common, bad attitude. Was Naaman willing to obey the command of God and believe the promise of God? He wanted some kind of religious show, some pomp. That is what people got from the Pope. But what they do not get from false holy men is exactly what Naaman got from Elisha: the true and infallible Word of God which revealed His means and His promises. What God said was true even if some holy man didn't "wave his hand over the place"! Dear readers, do you want the true Word of God, or a holy man to sprinkle water over the place and wave his hands? If you are like

most in the world, you want the latter. The problem is that the holy man cannot rid anyone of spiritual leprosy, which is sin and its damning guilt.

Naaman was willing to go back to Syria and wash in her own rivers, not seeing that what was unique about the Jordan was not the quality of its water, but that for Naaman at that time and that place, it was the only river commanded by God with an attendant promise. It represented, to Naaman, faith in what God had said through His authorized prophet. Would he believe and obey?

Thankfully, his servant spoke the truth to him and convinced him to listen to God's word:

*Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. (2Kings 5:13, 14)*

God keeps His promises to those who in faith obey His commands. Today people are more than willing to "do some great thing" that sounds good to them through human wisdom, all the while despising what God has ordained. We too can learn something through Naaman's servant. Shall we come to God on His terms or make up our own according to human wisdom? In so many cases, people will line up to see the Pope but would not think of actually obeying the gospel and believing God's promises.

## Accessibility

There is another factor that is usually

overlooked when it comes to means of grace: accessibility. God commands what He provides – and that for all, not just some spiritual elite. Means of grace are accessible to the people of God. The Jordan was there for Naaman to dip in. God's means which come with God's promises are accessible to all Christians. We cannot cleanse ourselves of our spiritual leprosy. But the cleansing God offers is there for all who will come. Paul addresses this in Romans 10:

*But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching. (Romans 10:6-8)*

Paul then urges us to confess the truth about Christ and believe that God raised Him from the dead. We need to "call on the name of the Lord" while fleeing from idols and ubiquitous false religion. What God asks is that we believe what is proven true in cold, sober history. Believe in Christ who was bodily raised.

Naaman's cure was accessible to him. So is ours. Means of grace are always accessible and are never designed for some spiritual elite. People misunderstand means of grace and replace them with spiritual disciplines which are *not* accessible. They make heroes of eccentric people such as desert fathers, monks, nuns, Popes, monastics, and others they deem spiritual. They teach practices that only some people can tolerate and glorify anyone with a mystical bent. Ignoring the figurative "Jordan" of God's command and promise, they long for "Syrian waters" never ordained by God.

The Naaman narrative has an inter-

esting interlude that reveals how the boundaries of nations were divided as it says in Deuteronomy 32:8, 9 (ESV). Israel was directly under Yahweh while the other nations were under the “sons of God.” These “sons of God” were spiritual beings that did not have the attributes of the eternal God of the Bible. Having been healed by the God of Israel, Naaman did not want to go back and have only his master’s “god,” who was Rimmon. To show his faith in the God of Israel, Naaman brought back two loads of dirt (1Kings 5:17) so that even though required to help his master when the Syrian king worshipped Rimmon, Naaman would have dirt from Israel to signify that he worshiped on the land of the God of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Thus Naaman rejected Rimmon for Yahweh.

Another issue arises in this narrative. Elisha had refused to accept any gift from Naaman though Naaman had brought very lavish gifts. God’s means of grace cannot be bought and sold. If they were, only the wealthy could afford them. The Reformation began partly when Luther objected to the Roman Catholic practice of selling indulgences. God’s means of grace are always the free gift of God. However, Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, saw Naaman’s healing as an opportunity to cash in. His wickedness was exposed and he ended up with Naaman’s leprosy (2Kings 5:20-27). Part of the matter of accessibility is that what God provides for our spiritual healing is His free gift. It cannot be bought or sold.

### The Lord’s Supper as Means of Grace

To illustrate that the categories I have described are Biblical, let us consider the Lord’s Supper. Does the Lord’s Supper have a command and a promise from God and are they accessible? The answer is “yes.” We can see this from the Scripture:

*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. (1Corinthians 11:23-26)*

Here we certainly have a command from God since “do this” is imperative in the Greek. We are commanded by Jesus Christ Himself to practice communion. We are to do so “in remembrance” of Christ. Means of grace remind us of what God has done for us. Naaman brought the loads of dirt to show he remembered that it was the God of Israel who had healed him and was the true God. We practice the Lord’s Supper so that we never forget how it was that our sins were forgiven through the atoning work of Christ when He shed His blood on our behalf, thus instituting the new covenant. The forgiveness of sins is mentioned in the Matthew account of the last supper: “*for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins*” (Matthew 26:28).

Means of grace also come with the promise of God. In the case of the Lord’s Supper, the promise is twofold: He is with us spiritually as we gather in His name according to His ordinance, and He will come again and celebrate table fellowship with us in the kingdom. Concerning His spiritual presence: “*For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst*” (Matthew 18:20). The certainty of the future, eschatological banquet: “*But I*

*say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom*” (Matthew 26:29). We not only remember, but as Paul said, we “proclaim the Lord’s death until His comes” (1Corinthians 11:26).

Accessibility is also vitally important. It was at this point that Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their abuse of the Lord’s table. That church had been divided into the haves and have nots. The rich were having a lavish banquet while the poor were left outside.<sup>2</sup> When people who are not under church discipline, as explained in Matthew 18, are barred from the Lord’s table for whatever reason, the important matter of accessibility is destroyed as is the means God intended for the benefit of the entire body of Christ.

In the Lord’s Supper we have the command of God, the promise of God and accessibility as well. These three factors define what is or is not a means of grace. Reading Martin Luther helped me come to see this and explain these categories. Rome was wont to control access to the things of God through their ungodly system. Luther unmasked that system and made sure that the means of grace were accessible to all. His teaching on the priesthood of every believer is outstanding by any standard and shows how all of us have access to God without being controlled by false religious teachers.

### Access to the Throne of Grace

We saw from the Naaman narrative that there are three key factors in a means of grace: a command from God, a promise of God and accessibility. The Lord’s Supper has all three and so does Christian prayer. We are told to pray, promised that God hears us, and given direct access to the throne of grace as priests to God who go to the one High Priest, Jesus Christ. Church history is

filled with false teachings about this where a so-called holy person can supposedly get God's ear in a way the rest of us cannot.

In the New Testament we have Christ and His apostles. They spoke for God like Moses and the prophets (like Elisha) did under the Old Covenant. Christ is our high priest in heaven; the apostles have died and have no successors. Even Elisha who spoke for God would not come out and see Naaman lest Naaman think that something or someone other than the command of God and the promise of God was necessary. We are told to bring our requests directly to God through Jesus Christ.

This section of scripture clearly explains prayer as commanded by God, with attending promises, and accessibility:

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)*

The Bible teaches the priesthood of every believer (1Peter 2:9) and Jesus as the only high priest. Any other priesthood is false and should be rejected. The Bible says: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1Timothy 2:5). The passage in Hebrews exhorts us to hold fast our confession while coming to the throne of grace where our high priest will meet us graciously. Hebrews often uses a grammatical form translated "let us" with imperative implications. We rightly take "let us" as a command to take action. Here is another example

of this: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23). Holding fast our confession in light of the One who promises is certainly not optional. We *must* do this. Likewise, we have a command to come to the high priest at the throne of grace in our time of need.

We also have promises in this passage where we are promised "mercy and grace to help." So we have the command of God and the promise of God. We also have accessibility. This truth should not be taken lightly. Human religious wisdom assumes that there are advanced religious figures who are closer to God and can help us get to God. This is what draws people to the Pope and the Roman Catholic priesthood. The truth is that the Pope is not close to God since he is devoid of the gospel. Judging from the reactions of the people mesmerized by his very presence, they feel closer to God if they can get closer to the Pope. This is false. No religious leader is closer to God and none can make us that way. All believers are priests and all believers can go directly to the throne of grace to the high priest Jesus.

### ***Feeling Near to God is not Drawing Near to God***

False religion substitutes *feeling* close to God for "drawing near" to God! Millions are deceived by false religious claims and look for some shaman, witch doctor or false holy man. Naaman started out thinking like that but decided to heed his servant and instead believe the promise of God even though Elisha did not even come out to meet him. Our passage in Hebrews bids us "draw near with confidence." This is an amazing admonition and promise. In the ancient world, no one drew near with confidence to a pagan king (see Esther) for fear of his life. Yet the Creator of the universe bids us draw near with "confi-

dence" (or "boldness" as the Greek could be translated). The term for "draw near" is used in the Greek Old Testament as a technical term for drawing near to God. Not everyone could do this. For example: "Speak to Aaron, saying, 'No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the bread of his God'" (Leviticus 21:17). That all believers can "draw near" under the New Covenant is a great blessing.

The only requirement for accessibility is that we come to Him in faith: "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). Our high priest sympathizes with our weaknesses, was tempted as we are though without sin and delights to give us mercy, grace and timely help. Thus prayer is a means of grace according to the Bible. Religious tradition cannot change that. Believe the promise of God and draw near to Him on His terms.

### **Means of Grace and the Results of Grace**

Pietistic religion confuses the means with the end. Pietism is a popular form of American Christianity but is false. It assumes that there is a higher order experience found by elite Christians that gives them a holy status that ordinary Christians lack. Means of grace, as we are claiming, have to be accessible. They do not require some sort of pious effort by religious elite before they are effective in changing lives. If you had to be hyper-pious first before finding grace to help in time of need, you would have found your sanctification first without grace. Some even claim that you simply have to obey everything God has commanded and then you will be pleasing to Him. "Go obey hundreds of commands and do it now, then God will have changed you," they say.

This sort of false teaching is why accessibility is necessary for something to be a means of grace. Elisha did not say, “Cleanse yourself of leprosy and then wash in the Jordan.” The cleansing was the end, the washing was the means. Likewise, changed lives lived in obedience to Christ is the end; God’s gracious means are designed for that to happen. Thus salvation and sanctification are by grace through faith. Salvation is through the “message preached.” He who commands that we preach the cross, preach repentance, and preach faith uses these to save those who will believe. We have the command to preach, the promise that the elect will be saved, and accessibility through the universal call of the gospel. That many people react as Naaman would have (had he not been dissuaded by his servant) says a lot about them, but nothing about the validity of God’s command, promise, and accessibility.

Sanctification is also by grace. We do not begin in the Spirit only to be perfected by the flesh (Galatians 3:3). I taught a series of messages on this for our Sunday School and created a chart [[http://cicministry.org/commentary/Means\\_of\\_Grace\\_Chart.pdf](http://cicministry.org/commentary/Means_of_Grace_Chart.pdf)] based on Acts 2:41, 42 about means of grace. In these passages we find baptism, the Word of God, prayer, fellowship, and the Lord’s Supper. The chart shows that all of these include a command from God, a promise from God and accessibility. We must remember, however, that faith undergirds this all. We must come in faith by God’s ordained means. God’s means are designed to change us into obedient children (1Peter 1:14-16). By them we remember what God has done for us in Christ. By them we encourage one another to love and good works. By them we have the promises of God on our minds and in our hearts: “*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corrup-*

*tion that is in the world by lust*” (2Peter 1:4).

Peter goes on to tell us to grow in our lives and increase in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ (2Peter 1:5-8). But what if we are not growing or changing? Does this suggest we need something more like therapy based on human wisdom? No! Peter tells us what would be the problem if we do not grow: “*For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins*” (2Peter 1:9). The problem is that we forgot what God did for us in Christ. Means of grace make sure that we remember. Sanctification is through what God has done for us and what He has promised to do as we walk in faith. It is not about what great things we imagine we are going to do for God.

### **False Means: Spiritual Disciplines**

Like Naaman’s initial response, people prefer to dream up their own means of spiritual healing. I have written about this in previous issues of CIC.<sup>3</sup> We can examine a couple of the most popular spiritual disciplines and show just how badly they fall short of Biblical categories. We will also see that they substitute *feeling* near to God for *drawing* near to God. People’s idea of feeling close to God comes from the subjective realm and mostly their own imaginations. Perhaps the Dalai Lama feels close to God and surely many people think he must be close to God, but by the terms of the gospel he is a horribly lost sinner who is far from God.

People are attracted to mysticism and false Roman Catholic ideas because they make them feel close to God. The pomp and ceremony (all of which is unbiblical) makes people have a sense of awe or false transcendence. So we have a decision at the outset, like Naaman did—do we want to draw near to God on His terms or feel close to God through man-made religious practices?

The false practices that deceive evangelicals are called “spiritual disciplines” taught in courses called “spiritual formation.” These are not from God and lead many people away from Christ and the gospel.

### **Silence and Solitude as False Means**

Most books on spiritual formation or spiritual disciplines teach silence and solitude. They are included in Donald Whitney’s false categories that I dealt with in a CIC article. Whether from the desert monks or medieval monasticism, these practices are often prescribed as means to spiritual progress or sanctification. Let us examine silence and solitude using the Biblical categories we have seen.

Does the Bible command us to practice silence and solitude? The answer is “no,” but false teachers are clever in their misuse of the Bible when they promote these practices. They say that because Jesus went out into the wilderness, we ought to do something similar.

This reasoning puts aside the uniqueness of Christ and thereby misleads people. Jesus was fully human and fully God in His Incarnation. He was unique, the “only begotten of God” (the unique One or only One of His kind). Only Jesus was a man who also had, in His deity, perfect communion with the Father for all eternity. Jesus was sinless, and that cannot be said about any of us. So when Jesus went into the wilderness in solitude, He did not bring any sin nature with Him. Jesus’ communion with the Father was perfect, which also cannot be said of us, as we are still in our sinful flesh. We can be deceived (and will be if we go where God has not commanded us to go!).

Teachers like Donald Whitney claim that Jesus “modeled” certain spiritual activities and that therefore we must practice these things. Jesus’ journey into the wilderness is often taken as

“modeling” silence and solitude. However, this is a false understanding of why Jesus went to be tempted in the wilderness and its significance. Israel was called God’s son in Exodus 4:22. Israel was led into the wilderness but failed for forty years. Jesus is the true Son of God and goes into the wilderness for forty days to succeed where Israel failed.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Heiser explains:

But [though Israel was called ‘God’s son’] Israel’s faith and loyalty to Yahweh faltered (Judg. 2:11-15). They were eventually seduced by the hostile divine powers (“demons”) whose domain was the wilderness (Deut. 32:15-20). Jesus, the messianic son of God and royal representative of the nation, would succeed where Israel failed.<sup>5</sup>

We need to trust Jesus and not presume that we can succeed spiritually in solitude.

If we foolishly went into the realm of silence and solitude (willingly) we take our sin nature with us. Our minds will go places that we do not want to go. Satan’s temptations will likely overwhelm us because we have presumed on God and put ourselves into temptation when in fact the Lord’s Prayer is that we not be led into temptation! The early anchorite monks had horrible demonic attacks and could hardly hang on to their sanity. Church historian Philip Schaff describes the experiences of Anthony, one of the first desert monks:

Conflicts with the devil and his hosts of demons were, as with other solitary saints, a prominent part of Anthony’s experience, and continued through all his life. The devil appeared to him in visions and dreams, or even in daylight, in all possible forms, now as a friend, now as a fasci-

nating woman, now as a dragon, tempting him.<sup>6</sup>

It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1). The Holy Spirit comes to us through the Word and God’s word does not tell us to go into solitude and silence. Those who do presume on God and are acting neither in faith nor obedience. We are not Jesus, and Jesus has not prescribed silence and solitude for us.

Yet false teachers today do prescribe silence and solitude. Where does the Bible say, “Go into the wilderness in solitude and I will meet you”? It does not. People report feeling close to God there, but as I have shown, such feelings are worthless. The Bible commands us to gather together in Christian fellowship, not to go off on our own. The desert monks willingly disobeyed the command and teaching of God that we need one another, they chose instead to do things their own mystical way, and thus rejected the command of God.

## Journaling

Contemporary Christians are so enamored with spiritual experimentation rather than believing the promises of God that they gravitate toward practices that even they admit are not biblical. For example, John Piper’s *Desiring God* ministry promotes journaling while simultaneously admitting that it is not required in Scripture. Evidently the absurdity of their claims escapes them. For example:

Journaling is not essential to the Christian life. But it is a powerful opportunity, especially with the technologies we have available today. Many throughout church history and around the world have found journaling to be a regular means of God’s grace in their lives.<sup>7</sup>

The absurdity is that if journaling is a means of grace, as they claim, then it is essential and must be biblical. Since it is not commanded in scripture and therefore comes with no promise, then it cannot be a means of grace. We do not find grace by experimentation or doing a survey of supposed holy men in church history. *Desiring God* cites Donald Whitney favorably on this and I have refuted his false claims in the previously mentioned CIC article.

## Spiritual Directors

Spiritual disciplines which are mystical practices, usually gleaned from Rome, are not biblical and therefore involve going into uncharted territory. When we purposely go into the spiritual realm we put ourselves into the realm of deception. This danger is such that rather than using the Bible to define the only valid practices, promoters of spiritual formation often offer spiritual directors. These are “Christian” versions of shamans. Richard Foster promotes spiritual directors and I refuted his ideas in a CIC article.<sup>8</sup>

The reason for spiritual directors is that pagan cultures always have a class of people who are more adept at navigating the spirit world. They are consulted to help the less adept in whatever version of spirituality they have embarked on. In some cultures these people are called witch doctors. Spiritual directors are spiritists and do not speak for God. These people are forbidden in the Bible:

*When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who*

casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. (Deuteronomy 18:9-11)

Evangelicalism has taken a decidedly pagan turn in our day. Spirituality has become undefined and dangerous. People do not take seriously Paul's warning about another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel (2Corinthians 11:4). We need to start heeding the warnings and practice means of grace, which are never dangerous and always for our spiritual good.

## Conclusion

Spiritual disciplines are not means of grace; they are not given by God in Scripture, and they are dreamed up by spiritual innovators in church history. If by accident someone calls something a "spiritual discipline" that is in fact a means of grace, then they should quit confusing the saints and get their categories right. To list multiple practices with unbiblical sources and sprinkle in a few valid practices is to purposely confuse the saints and use the valid to promote the invalid. We can safely reject every book on spiritual disciplines as an unwarranted intrusion of false practices into the church.

With the categories we have laid out, we can easily test each and every claim concerning a spiritual practice to see if it is a means of grace. If God did not command it, we can rule it out. If God did command it but there is no

promise that God will meet us in the practice to bring about change, then we are describing the result of grace – not a means of grace. This also speaks to the issue of accessibility. It is correct that we should perfectly obey everything God commanded. But knowing that does not make perfect obedience in this life accessible. This obedience is our life-long goal that is ultimately perfected at the resurrection. Means of grace are accessible practices that help us grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

Naaman decided to lay aside his pagan ideas and listen to the command of God from the prophet of God. He decided to believe the promise of God because of the wise counsel of his servant. He was cleansed of leprosy and became a follower of Yahweh. He obeyed God. Will we do the same? It is crucial that we reject pagan spirituality and allow God alone to define our spiritual practices. Let us believe and obey God, coming to Him on *His* terms.

## End Notes

1. See Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm – Recovering the supernatural worldview of the Bible*; (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 117, 118. Heiser offers a very helpful explanation of Deuteronomy 32:8, 9 as central to a Biblical worldview.
2. See Gordon Fee's outstanding commentary on 1Corinthians in the NICNT series for a very helpful dis-

cussion of the Corinthian's abuse of the Lord's Supper.

3. CIC Issue 111 deals with Donald Whitney's false spiritual disciplines: <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue111.htm> I also have written about pietism: <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue101.htm>
4. See France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (127–128).
5. Heiser, op. cit. 277-279. If we think we can go where God never led us and overcome we are seriously deceived.
6. Schaff, P., & Schaff, D. S. (1910). *Vol. 3: History of the Christian church (183–184)*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
7. Desiring God; online source: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/journal-as-a-pathway-to-joy>
8. See CIC issue 112 <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue112.htm>

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