

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing

I listened to a priest on Thought for the Day on Radio Scotland on Friday. He was talking about the amazing Stephen Sutton who was terminally ill with cancer and decided to live and to give. He did amazing things, many of his wishes came true, a kind of bucket list of ordinary things and out of the ordinary. He also decided to raise money for a teenage cancer charity and hoped to reach £10,000. His internet diary attracted attention around the world and when he died this week the amount raised was close to £4,000,000.

But the priest said people have asked him why God did not heal such an amazing person. He spoke of all the sadness he sees as a priest, people suffering and anxious and grieving. He said "I wish I could heal like Jesus healed but I can't do that."

Yet Jesus said **"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing." What did Jesus mean?**

This is a promise to all believers, all Christians

Not just for pastors or elders or missionaries or mature Christians but all Christians

All believers will do his work -

We immediately think of all Jesus had done up to this point -

Turned water into wine (John 2 : 1)

Knew everything about the Samaritan woman he met at the well (John 4 : 18)

Healed the official's son (John 4 : 46)

Healed the man crippled for 38 years (John 5 : 1)

Fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish (John 5 : 1)

He had walked on water (John 6 : 19)

He had healed the man born blind (John 9 : 1)

and he had raised Lazarus from the dead four days after his burial (John 11 : 43)

When it says that all who believe in Jesus will do what Jesus did, does it mean that all Christians will do all these things or some Christians will do some of these things - and if you can't do these things are you not a believer?

The New Testament letters make it clear that the ability to do miracles are a gift from God that some Christians have and some do not -

1 Cor 12 - Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophesy

So not all believers will do all these works of Jesus - so what then does Jesus mean when he says all believers will do the works I do.

Look back at verse 11 - Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves

Jesus works are designed to help people believe in him. He says if you can't believe what I say about who I am then at least see the works I have performed and then believe.

Then verse 12 follows - whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, the things that I do.

Now Jesus works, everything he did, point people to believe that he is the son of God and so our works must be the same, helping people believe that Jesus is the son of God.

We will be so united with Jesus that we will carry on his work and do the kind of things that will tell people about Jesus, underline our faith in him

So some Christians might be given specific gifts by God, gifts of miracles and healing and prophecy and so on, but all Christians will do the works of Christ in that everything we do will show the love of Christ to others, point to the glory of Christ by their lives of love

We are the aroma of Christ

We are the light of the world

We are the salt of the earth

We were dead and we are born again and are alive in him

It is encouraging to know that even when we cannot find the words to speak or we are too shy and lacking confidence in speaking out for Jesus, we can still point people to Jesus by what we do, by being loving and caring and compassionate, by our works.

Jesus went further, in verse 12 he said **we will do greater works than he did** - now we would be hard pushed to do something better than walking on water or raising the dead or feeding thousands with seven small pieces of food.

No Christian who has ever lived has surpassed Jesus in these miraculous things.

But the followers of Jesus would do greater things in another respect - because Jesus has gone to the Father - after these words to his disciples recorded in John 14 Jesus would go to the cross and die, he would be buried and rise again from the dead, he would ascend to his Father in heaven - and then he would send his Holy Spirit to empower his believers.

Jesus in his physical body could be in one physical place at any one time. Jesus dwelling in all believers by his Holy Spirit can be all over the place! So of course the believers then and today can do greater works than Jesus because they are operating on millions of fronts every day around the world, they are taking the spirit of Jesus Christ literally to the world.

This is what it truly means when we say we are the hands and the feet and the eyes and the ears and the voice of Jesus in the world.

Moving on to verse 13, Jesus said - **And I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the son might bring glory to the Father. You may ask for anything in my name and I will do it.**

Now people get all confused about this verse. Taken out of context, people can say, "I asked Jesus for this and that and he did not give it to me, I asked him to do this and that and he did not do it." What did he mean by saying he will do anything we ask?

Jesus is not saying he will give us everything we ask for, for ourselves or our families or those we pray about, he will not do everything we want him to do.

But he will give us whatever we need to do the works of the kingdom, to draw people to faith in him, to bring glory to God. He will equip us to reach out to those in need, the lost and the lonely and the searching. In that sense he promises that he will give us what we need to continue his work in the world.

We are all called to take Christ into the world and to carry on the works of Jesus. But what about the supernatural gifts, the powers of the Holy Spirit given to men and women? How do we know if God wants us to exercise one or more of these gifts?

You see, many will say today that these supernatural gifts of healing and knowledge and prophecy were only for the early church and not for today. They will argue that God had to give the first generation disciples powers and gifts in order to reinforce Jesus' ministry, to draw new disciples in order to establish the young church. Such powers, they argue, only existed for 30, 40 maybe 50 years.

I do not believe this, it does not make sense.

Why would the all powerful Holy Spirit of God suddenly lose power and influence and stop equipping the church with the very gifts that set the church apart from other groups and clubs and even other religions? If it was the Holy Spirit at Pentecost who set the disciples hearts on fire and gave them powers to heal and prophecy and have knowledge and speak in tongues and become powerful intercessors, why would that flame subside and grow dim in future generations of the church?

The bible is the living word of God. The New Testament was written in the decades immediately following Jesus' life on earth and it was written to be relevant to us over 2000 years later. God is the same yesterday, today and forever, Christ was in the beginning, the Holy Spirit is unchanging and will be with us until the end of time. So why would we think that the visible power of God would somehow be diminished?

I have been exploring the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the past ten years or so and I have been amazed at what I have discovered and experienced. Each personal encounter with the Holy Spirit at work has deepened faith and understanding.

I was at a Christian conference about five years ago. At one point people were invited to come forward for prayer for healing. I had had a knee injury for about three years. I have been thrown off a friend's horse onto the road only a couple of miles from here! Fortunately nothing was broken but I had a lot of grazing to my left knee. It healed over but I had not realised that there were pieces of grit in the

wound. I could feel the tiny stones on my knee cap and I was unable to kneel down. This went on for about three years and I should have gone to see about it. When a woman prayed about this, I was sure it would then be healed immediately and I was disappointed when I tested it out by kneeling on a chair to find that it was as painful as ever. But the next morning I knelt down and the grit and the pain had completely gone. This was only a relatively small thing, I know people who have been healed of much bigger things through prayer. But God gave me a glimpse of his healing power.

I have been exploring words of knowledge and how to hear what God wants to say to people. When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, he was a stranger to her and he amazed her by having knowledge of her life. She ran to tell her friends "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Jesus revealed himself through his knowledge of her.

I explored this by taking a course called The Art of Hearing God. I was skeptical when I began the course and convinced by the end of it that God will answer prayer for knowledge.

During the course with about twenty other people who were all complete strangers to me, I had to pray about specific individuals and offer words of encouragement that were relevant to their lives. At first it was scary, you are with a total stranger, you know nothing about him or her, what would I say?

But each time, as I waited on God, words came.

I told one man that he had had a major disappointment which had shattered his faith and his confidence for a while but he should be encouraged because God was opening a new door for him. The man then told me that he had been a minister but it had all gone wrong for him. He was no longer working as a minister but was just beginning to explore a new way of serving God, a new project.

I told another man that I could see him surrounded by young people who were looking up to him and that God was going to increase his work in this area. He then told me that he was actually a Christian youth worker and had been unsure about whether he was being effective in this area, should he continue or give up?

I have taken part in a number of Christian outreach events in the community where people come who are seeking something more in their lives, they are usually not Christians and they do not often know what they are seeking.

At an event in a church in Glasgow, I found myself opposite a man who told me his name was Tom. That is all we ask when someone sits down. I could see this man in a garden surrounded by beautiful flowers, I felt that he knew in his heart that there is a creator God responsible for this natural beauty but he had not yet given his life to the Lord. Tom then told me that he has worked as a gardener for thirty years, he loved his work and he did want to believe that God created the beauty around him.

In Livingston, at an outreach event in a lounge bar of all places, a girl in her late teens came and asked what God wanted to say to her. I said to the girl that all I could see was the colour purple, not a specific object but the colour purple and God wanted her to know that he loved her, that there was something she needed to deal with so that she could move on into the amazing plans he has for her life. She began to cry and said that she knew exactly what that meant. She was grieving for her grandfather who had died two years ago. He had raised her and had been more like a father to her. She was finding it hard to move on. She particularly wanted to scatter his ashes but had been unable to do so. They were in a purple container in the back of her wardrobe. She was overwhelmed that God knew and cared about her and she said that she would now have the strength to release her grandfather's ashes and begin to look to the future.

People often go away from these encounters amazed and wanting to know more about the God who knows them. I certainly come away from these encounters amazed by the words that God provides and the insights that he gives. It is laying claim to Jesus' promise that he will answer prayer to equip us to do works that point people to himself and to his father in heaven.

God will equip us, each one of us, to do the work of the kingdom here on earth. We carry out the work of his kingdom every day in our homes and places of work, as we travel and as we socialize with people, in the words that we say and in the things that we do, in the way we do things and in the love and care that we show to others in Jesus name.

I would encourage you to dig a little deeper, to ask God to give you more and more of the power of the Holy Spirit, to open your eyes to the gifts he wants to grow in you, to open your ears to the words and knowledge he wants you to hear. I believe that there is a little of the charismatic in all of us! Remember Jesus' words **"I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it."**

AMEN