

The Pentecostal Passage?

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning as we come to the Word of God, we come to what I like to call the Pentecostal passage. Of course, all of you know that there are many different expressions of the Christian faith.

There are different denominations, different churches. Even in our own little town of Davidson here, we have six different churches. And I'm not going to get into all the differences between our churches this morning.

But we come now in the Gospel of John to some words that Jesus spoke, which are at the very heart of our differences with our brothers and sisters over at the New Life Pentecostal Church.

Jesus is in the upper room at the Last Supper with his disciples. He's been giving them comfort, encouragement, instructions.

He's been telling them what to expect in the days ahead. We'll pick up the conversation in verse 11 of John chapter 14.

[1 : 01] John chapter 14, verse 11. Jesus says to them, Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

Or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. And we talked about this two weeks ago. Jesus is calling his disciples to believe something astounding and wonderful.

He's calling them to believe that God the Father is in him. And that he is in God the Father. And the evidence that Jesus points them to is the works that he's been doing.

The miracles. The signs. The wonders. Things only God can do. But now we imagine Jesus looks at the men around the table.

And he says this to them. Very truly, I tell you. Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing. And they will do even greater things than these.

[2 : 10] Because I am going to the Father. And as soon as we read this, many of us go, What? Did I hear that right?

Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing. And they will do even greater things than these. Because I am going to the Father.

This is what I call the Pentecostal passage. And for those of us who aren't Pentecostal, probably many of us in this room, We hear the plain sense of these words and we say, What?

Whoever believes in your name will do the works you have been doing? Will do miracles? Signs? Signs? And wonders?

I mean, Jesus kind of seems to be saying that, right? And for many of us, we think, I mean, he can't mean that. He can't mean that every believer will do miracles.

[3 : 13] Can he? The plain sense of Jesus' words here Make all of us who are not Pentecostal Squirm.

Or, in the words of my old professor, These words make us do a little dance, Trying to explain what they mean. Well, it can't mean this. And we look at this passage over here and bring it all together.

It must mean this. And we don't like to dance. Because we're not, most of us, Pentecostals. I'm kidding. So why do these words make us so uncomfortable?

Why do they make us squirm? Why do they make us do a little interpretive dance? Well, let's just acknowledge the facts. These words make us uncomfortable Because they seem to say that whoever believes in Jesus Will perform miracles.

They seem to say that performing miracles, Doing the kinds of things that Jesus did, Is a normal part of the Christian life For every believer.

[4 : 21] And so it makes us uncomfortable Because, dare I say, for all of us, That has not been our experience. What miracles have you performed lately?

Many of us have heard of miracles happening. We've even prayed for miracles to happen. Especially for friends and family to be healed.

And in some cases, God has answered our prayers. And we have seen that. But performing miracles? I'll tell you the truth. I've never done that.

Not anything like Jesus did. Have you? And it's not just either. It's not just us either.

There are some people over at the Pentecostal church Right now who are likely wondering the same thing. Miracles like Jesus did. They don't happen every day over there.

[5 : 19] And why not? If these words of Jesus mean what they seem to mean, Shouldn't they all be performing miracles? At least occasionally. Like maybe once a month.

Or even once a year. Now I don't know how many brothers and sisters We have over there at New Life right now. But let's say it's about 30. Assuming all of them are genuine, born-again believers.

Who each do just one miracle a year. We can expect to see at least 30 miracles per year Happening over there. Like 30 of the kinds of things that Jesus did on a regular basis That can only be explained by the power of God Done by the hands of our brothers and sisters at New Life.

Do we see that? Well, if you were to ask them, Many of our Pentecostal brothers and sisters Are quite optimistic in their answer Because they also believe that faith in God's power Is a requirement to see miracles happen.

They believe that doubt is a diminisher of miracles. But there are some of them Who will straight up tell you I don't know why we aren't seeing God Work in these kinds of ways More in our church And in our community.

[6 : 37] But for whatever reason It hasn't been happening. So what do we do With these words of Jesus? Well, as I've implied One option is to just take these words Of Jesus at face value And become Pentecostal.

We can begin to expect That everyone who believes Will do miracles like Jesus did And even greater things Than he did. But then what do we do With this great absence Of this ability To perform miracles In the lives of countless believers Over the past 2,000 years?

This can become a real source of doubt And disillusionment With our faith. I mean, he says Whoever believes in me Will do the works I have been doing And even greater ones.

So maybe the problem We might wonder Is with my believing. Is my believing genuine? Am I not believing enough? Am I not believing the right things?

Am I maybe just not Taking those steps of faith Or acting Or taking hold of that power That I have? And what a knot We can get ourselves into Over this thing that Jesus said.

[7 : 59] The alternative is that we Don't take these words At face value And we end up having to squirm.

We end up doing some kind of Interpretive dance To explain what Jesus meant And how All of us are okay Even though we're not Performing miracles.

So We're going to look at a couple Of the interpretive dance moves That we Often do To make ourselves Comfortable with these words Of Jesus And I don't mean any disrespect To any of our brothers And sisters Who have said these things Or hold these views I don't mean any irreverence either But allow me a bit of humor As we consider the various Interpretive dance moves That Christians like us Do With these words of Jesus The first interpretive dance move We might see Is the works of Jesus Wiggle Some will point out That Jesus did All kinds of works And not just miracles He did works of compassion Works of service He did the work of proclaiming The good news of the kingdom And there is some truth to this If we remember back To John chapter 4 And the Samaritan woman At the well You'll remember there That there was this whole bunch

Of Samaritan townsfolk That were coming out To see Jesus And in the midst of this The disciples were trying To get Jesus To eat some lunch And Jesus basically said to them Open your eyes men The fields are ripe for harvest We've got work to do We've got to do this work Of harvesting the crop That's about to come in And so it's true Jesus thought of his works His work As more than just miracles His works included teaching And preaching Sharing the good news of the kingdom Acts of compassion And service And so some will then Go from there To say Well Jesus didn't mean That every believer Would do miracles He meant that every believer Would do Some kind of the works That Jesus Had been doing That in some way Every believer Would take up The works of Jesus

And well I guess For most of us It seems that it's mostly Acts of compassion And service And spreading the good news Because most of us We're not performing miracles Are we?

[10 : 33] But you know This interpretive dance move Has never really satisfied me For a couple of reasons First of all Jesus says here In the same breath That they will do Even greater things Than the things That he has been doing And so as soon as we hear that I mean we can't help But think Of miracles It's comparative language This is what Jesus Was known for He was known for Doing all kinds Of very great things Things like healing Casting out demons Walking on water And so the natural Sense of this Comparative language Suggests that At the least They will do The same kinds of things That Jesus did If not things That surpass What Jesus did Second Let's remember Why Jesus is talking About his works In the first place He was giving The disciples A reason to believe

That God the Father Is in him And he Is in the Father That's a big claim Which requires Big evidence To back it up And so The works That Jesus Did Is what he Pointed them to So that they Might believe They must Include his miracles And signs So I'm not too sure About redefining Works here I don't think Jesus means That everyone Who believes Will only Do the Non-miraculous Works of Jesus And even Greater Non-miraculous Works than he Did So that's The works Of Jesus Wiggle One of several Interpretive dance Moves that we Find ourselves Doing with a Passage like this So that we can Be comfortable The next dance Move in our Repertoire Is the Lexicon Limbo And usually

We see people Do this move Right after the Works of Jesus Wiggle People will hear This statement Of Jesus Whoever believes In me Will do the Works I've been Doing And they will Do even Greater Things than These And we look At that word Greater And we just Think Well it Can't be It can't Be that We'll do Works that Are greater Than Jesus Did And since None of us Seems to be Doing works That are Greater in Quality Than Jesus Did He must Mean that Believers As a Collective Whole Will do More amazing Will do More works Greater in Quantity Than Jesus Did I mean Surely Jesus is Not saying That every Believer Will do More amazing Things than He did He raised People from The dead He walked On water He calmed Storms He fed Multitudes What could Possibly be Greater than These things Surely Jesus meant That we would

All do Greater Things As in Together We would Do Things Greater In number As in More things Because now There are More of us And with Each passing Year more And more People are Being added To the church And we're Doing more And more And more Things Carrying on The works Of Jesus For years And years To come But I call This the Lexicon Limbo Because it Bends that Word greater Beyond its Customary Meaning The word Greater In the Original Language When it's Used like This It doesn't Really mean Greater In amount It means Greater in Size Greater in Importance Better Better Quality Superior Not More Numerous And as Several scholars Have noted There are Plenty of Other Greek Words that Would naturally Convey More Numerous Or many More Works If that's What Jesus Meant So what

Does Jesus mean When he Says that They will Do even Greater Works Than he Did In my Mind The Lexicon Limbo Doesn't Quite Make it Under It Bends That Word Just a Little Too Far Back Trying to Get under The Bar So what Do we Do with These Words of Jesus This Seeming Promise That Every Believer Will Do Miracles And Even Greater Miracles Than Jesus Performed Taking It At Face Value Doesn't Seem To Work It Leaves Us Doubting And Disillusioned The Works Of Jesus Wiggle Doesn't Seem To Work Because While The Works Of Jesus May Have Included More Than Just Miracles It Certainly Doesn't Include Less And The Lexicon Limbo Doesn't Seem To Work Because It Seems To Challenge The Word That Jesus Chose And Force On It A Meaning That's Rather Unusual To It There Has To Be Another Meaning One

[15 : 36] That Acknowledges The Plain Sense Of The Text The Logical Flow Of Jesus Statements And Also Fits With The Story Of The Christian Church Well Let Me Suggest An Alternative Understanding It's Probably Not The Most Popular And I'm Not Going To Claim That I Know For Sure That This Is The Right One I'm Okay If At The End Of This You Have A Different View A Different Belief About This If You Want You Can Even Have Fun With My View You Can Call It The Joshua Jive Or Something Like That But This Is How I've Come To Handle These Words Of Jesus Jesus Said Whoever Believes In Me Will Do The Works I Have Been Doing And Even Greater Things Than These So The First Question That I Ask Is Does Jesus Mean That Every Believer Will Do Miracles To The Relief Of Many There Is

An Authoritative Answer To This Question In The Bible Paul Makes A Statement About It In His Letter To The Corinthian Church Over A Decade Later First Corinthians Chapter Twelve Verse Twenty Seven Paul Writing To Them Says Now You Are The Body Of Christ And Each One Of You Is A Part Of It And God Has Placed In The Church First Of All Apostles Second Prophets Third Teachers Then Miracles Then Gifts Of Healing Of Helping Of Guidance And Of Different Kinds Of Tongues Are All Apostles Are All Prophets Are All Teachers Do All Work Miracles Do All Have Gifts Of Healing Do All Speak In Tongues Do All Interpret Paul Paul Asks A Series Of Rhetorical Questions To Make His Point He's Been Talking About How

God Has Given Different Gifts Of The Spirit To Each Member In The Church He's Been Talking About How Each Person In The Church Is Like A Different Part Of The Body Each One Has Their Unique Gifts And Functions And Role That They Play In The Body Of Christ And Each One Is Important And Then He Comes Around To Emphasizing This Point That There Are Many Different Roles To Play Within The Body Within The Church Using These Rhetorical Questions And The Answer To Each One Of These Questions Is No Of Course Are All Apostles No Are All Prophets No Are All Teachers No Do All Work Miracles No The Point Is To Each Person In The Church Their Gifts And Abilities And Roles Just As He Sees Fit And They Shouldn't Think Themselves Superior To Others Or Inferior

To Others Because Of Their Different Giftings And Abilities Now I Know That This Raises A Whole Another Set Of Questions Because Of Some Of The Things Paul Says Here But Let's Stay Focused On The Question Does Jesus Mean That Every Believer Will Work Miracles Let Me Put These Two Passages Side By Side Paul Answers The Question For Us By The Spirit Of Christ In Him He Says Do All Work Miracles Implied Answer No They Don't Not Every Member Of The Church Not Every Believer Will Work Miracles We Shouldn't Expect That That's Not How God Has Arranged The Body Of Christ Which Means That Likely We've Misunderstood Just Who These Words Of Jesus In

John 14 12 Apply To And It's Here That I'll Suggest That If We Dig A Little Bit If We Study A Little Bit If We Reflect On This A Little Bit An Alternative Presents Itself We Can Start By Looking At Some Of The Other Translations Of This Passage In English And Very Quickly We Notice That There Are Some Differences Some Have Whoever Believes In Me NIV ESV Probably A few More Of The Majority Translations Say The One Who Believes In Me The Person Who Believes In Me He Who Believes In Me Will Do The Works That I Have Been Doing So What's Hiding Under The Differences In These Translations Well The Most Literal Rendering Of The Original Language That I Can Give Is This The One Believing In Me The Works I Do That One Also Will Do And

[20 : 39] It's Here That I As I Was Reflecting On This And Studying This I Noticed That There's A Little Word That Was Missing In The Original Language There is In Greek A Word For Whoever But That's Not The Word John Used Here And There's Also A Little Particle Which I'll Call The Ever Particle In In In In Greek And You Can Add That On To Who To Make Whoever Or To What To Make Whatever Or To When To Make Whenever And That Particle That Little Ever Particle It's Not Here Either And John Could Have Used It In Fact He Uses The Ever Particle In The Very Next Verse To Capture What Jesus Said When He Said Whatever You Ask In My Name I Will Do But He Doesn't Use That Particle Here It's Literally The One Who Believes In Me Will

Also Do The Works That I Do Now There Are Some Scholars Who Would Push Back On That And They Would Say Hold On A Minute Don't You Try To Pull A Fast One On Those People We Left We Got To Look At Those Other Passages Because Jesus Left Out The Ever In A Lot Of Other Statements He Made John 6 35 For Example Jesus Said The One Who Believes In Me Shall Never Thirst He Didn't Use The Ever Particle There It Clearly It Means Anyone Everyone Whoever Believes In Me Shall Never Thirst Same Thing In John 7 38 The One Who Believes In Me Out Of His Heart Will Flow Rivers Of Living Water It's Obvious Jesus Means Whoever Believes In Me This Will Happen For Them John 12 46 The One Who Believes In Me Will Not Walk In Darkness And Again It's Obvious That Jesus Really Really Does Means

Whoever Believes In Me This Will Be True For Them They Won't Walk In The Darkness But In All Of These Cases We Have To Remember The Context Jesus Makes All Of These Other Statements In Public Teaching Moments To The Crowds To All Kinds Of People And So Of Course When He Says The One Who Believes In Me In These Moments He Means Whoever Whoever Believes In Me But Now Look At Who Jesus Is Talking To In John Chapter 14 Verse 12 He's Not Talking In Public He's Talking To The Eleven Men Seated Around The Table With Him When He Says To Them The One Who Believes In Me Will Do The Works I Have Been Doing And Even Greater Works Than Is Jesus

Stating A Timeless Principle For All Believers When He Says The One Who Believes In Me Will Do The Works I Have Been Doing And Even Greater Or Is Jesus Only Speaking To The Men In The Room Is This A Statement Of What All Believers Should Expect As The Norm In Their Christian Life To Perform Miracles Like Jesus Did Or Is Jesus Only Granting This To The Men Seated Around The Table In The Room We Have To Remember The Context That Jesus Spoke These Words Into He Wasn't Speaking To The Crowds In Public He Speaking To The Eleven Men Whom He Has Designated Apostles Those Who Are Here With Him Now In The Inner Room Is It Possible That We've Simply Assumed That These Words Of John 14 12 Apply Directly

To All of Us To All Who Believe In Jesus In Every Century When Actually All Along Jesus Meant The One Who Believes Among You Here With Me In The Room Will Do Greater Things Than The Things That I Have Been Doing Will Do The Works That I Have Been Doing I Got Thinking About This And I Realized We Say Things Like This All The Time On Friday Nights We're Doing Youth Group Here At The Church And We Often Play Games And To Spice The Games Up Sometimes We Like To Have A Prize I Might Say Something Like And Yes We Do This In The Sanctuary Whoever Lands Their Paper Airplane In This Square At The Front Of The Sanctuary Wins A Prize Whoever And It Simply Understood That When I Say Whoever I Mean Whoever Of You Here In The Room Tonight I Don't Mean Whoever Tomorrow

[25 : 41] And The Next Day And On And On And On Or I Might Say The One Who Crosses The Finish Line With Their Partner First Gets To Have Snack First And What I Mean Of Course Is The One Out Of All Of You Here Tonight Who Crosses The Finish Line First Gets To Have Snack First What If We Assumed That Jesus Is Giving A Timeless Principle For Every Believer Just Like He Did When He Taught In Public When Really This Promise That The One Who Believes Would Do Miracles Was Only For The Men That He Spoke To In The Room That Night And It Kind Of Has To Mean That Doesn't It I Mean The Apostle Paul Said Do All Work Miracles No So Jesus Can't Mean My Faith These Men In The Room These Eleven Apostles Of Jesus Will Do The Same Kinds Of Works That Jesus Has Been Doing Miracles

And You Know What's Funny That's Precisely How The Story Goes Isn't It The Book Of Acts Which Comes After The Story Of Jesus Is It's Called Acts Because It Details Many Of The Acts Of The Apostles The Works That They Did With That Special That Jesus Gave Them As Much As They Put Their Faith Their Belief In Jesus They Were Able To Do The Same Sorts Of Miracles That Jesus Did We Could Think About This From Their Perspective For A Moment Let's Acknowledge That Up Till This Point In The Story Jesus Is Not The Only One Who Has Been Doing Miracles Back In Luke Chapter Nine We This Is Much Earlier On In The Story We Read This Jesus There Was A Time When He Had Called The Twelve Together And He Gave Them Power And Authority To Drive Out All

Demons And To Cure Diseases And He Sent Them Out To Proclaim The Kingdom Of God And To Heal The Sick And So They Went Out And They Did Healing People Everywhere It Happens Again In Luke Chapter 10 The Lord It Says Appointed 72 Others And Sent Them Out Two By Two Ahead Of Him To Every Town And Place Where He Was About To Go And He Told Them Heal The Sick Who Are There And Tell Them The Kingdom Of God Has Come Near To You And So They Did They Came Back Rejoicing Saying Lord Even The Demons Submit To Us In Your Name And Jesus Says A couple Verses Later Yes I Have Given You Authority To Trample On Snakes And Scorpions And To Overcome All The Power Of The Enemy So The Twelve Apostles Of Jesus And Even A Good Number Of Others They Were Given Special Power And Authority By Jesus To Do The Same Things

The Same Kinds Of Works That Jesus Had Been Doing Miracles And This Special Power And Authority And The Miracles That They Did With It Those Miracles That Was The Evidence That The Message Of The Kingdom Was True That Jesus Really Was The Messiah The Son Of God So This Whole Idea Of Doing Miracles Is It's Not New For The Disciples For The Apostles At The Table What Is New Is That From Now On Jesus Will No Longer Be With Them He's About To Die To Rise And To His Father In Heaven And From Then On It Will Be A Test Of Their Faith And So Jesus Is Telling Them That They Must Continue To Believe In Him Even After He Is Gone And If They Do They Will Continue To Do The Works That Jesus Has Been Doing

Miracles Signs Things That Point To Jesus As The Savior That People Must Accept And This Is Exactly What Happened If You Know The Story Jesus Died He Rose Again He Ascended And At Pentecost The Spirit Came Down Upon The Apostles Those Gathered In The Room And They Began To Do Amazing Things Things That Only The Power Of God Can Do We'll Just Quickly Look At One Example Acts Chapter Three This Is After That Moment At Pentecost One day Peter and John Were Going Up To The Temple At The Time Of Prayer At Three In The Afternoon Now a Man Who Was Lame From Birth Was Being Carried To The Temple Gate Called Beautiful Where He Was Put Every Day To Beg From Those Going Into The Temple Courts When He Saw Peter And John About To Enter He Asked Them For Money Peter Looked Straight

[30 : 44] At Him As Did John Then Peter Said Look At Us So The Man Gave Them His Attention Expecting To Get Something From Them Then Peter Said Silver Or Gold I Do Not Have But What I Do I Give You In The Name Of Jesus Christ Of Nazareth Walk And Taking Him By The Right Hand He Helped Him Up And Instantly The Man's Feet And Ankles Became Strong He Jumped To His Feet And Began To Walk Then He Went With Them Into The Temple Courts Walking And Jumping And Praising God When All The People Saw Him Walking And Praising God They Recognized Him How Beautiful And They Were And They Were In The Name

Of Jesus Christ Walk Peter Knew That He Had A Special Authority And Power From God To Do This For This Man What I Do Have I Give You He Invokes The Name Of Jesus And He Commands The Man To Walk And By The Power Of God Through The Faith Of Peter Jesus Does The Work Of Healing Through Peter The Words Of Jesus On The Night Of His Betrayal Are Beginning To Be Fulfilled Now I Know That This Interpretation Raises A Lot Of Questions For Starters You Might Be Wondering Well If This Promise Is Only For The Apostles In The Room Then Shouldn't We Also Conclude That Everything Jesus Said That Night Is Only For The Apostles In The Room What About The Next Verse That Jesus Says I Mean That's My Assurance Of Answered Prayer Verse Whatever You Ask In My Name I Will Give You Does That Mean That Only The Apostles

Were Given Assurance Of Answered Prayer Great Questions Come Back Next Sunday We'll Talk About It Then Some Of You Are Maybe Still Wondering Well How Are The Apostles Works Greater Than The Works That Jesus Did You Didn't Answer That One Josh Come Back Next Sunday We'll Talk About It Then For Others Of You You Might Be Wondering About A Few Other Passages Which Seem To Imply That Ordinary Church Members Performed Miracles And Healings And Spoken Tongues And Prophesied And Doesn't That Suggest That We Should Expect To See That Today Too And That This Promise That Jesus Gave Really Is For Us But We Don't Have Time To Go Any Further In That Discussion This Morning But These Are Important Questions And At The Heart Of Them What We Believe Is The Reason For Why We Have Our Church And New Life Pentecostal Church Here In Town We Do Have Differences And If You Ever Want To Chat

Further About These Things Over Coffee Or Anytime Give Me A Call Send Me A Text Come Talk To Me Let's Look At Some Passages Together And Just So You Know I I If You End Up Believing A Little Differently Than I Do On These Things Finally What Do We Take From All This Well If You Have Been Struggling With These Words Of Jesus I Hope You Found You If Been Bothered Or Had Doubts About Whether You Ade Or Have bro's Leben de ■■■■ Says Not Is Not The Test Of Faith performing miracles is not to be expected as the normal christian life millions of brothers and sisters in the faith through the centuries have had a similar experience to yours they've trusted jesus with all their hearts they've loved him they've served him and never once performed a miracle in their lives do all work miracles no last but not least a quick word about our pentecostal brothers and sisters we have our differences yes and there's some things maybe that some of them are into that and believe that concern us yes but here's one passage where countless of our pentecostal brothers and sisters have simply been trying to take jesus at his word at the plain sense of his word they believe what they believe because if you simply read these words in english that's what they seem to say and many of our pentecostal brothers and sisters are just earnestly trying to be as biblical as we are we can show them a passage or two maybe that makes them squirm and dance a little bit but when they point to this passage we're the ones doing an interpretive dance so let's be gracious and humble towards our brothers and sisters in that community i'm sure that when the lord returns for everything that he sets them straight for he'll have something to set us straight for as well let's pray father in heaven thank you so much for your word you did say some difficult things at times but we thank you that we can wrestle through these things together we thank you that you did give clear signs that you sent jesus that he is the savior we don't have to wonder or question that and we thank you that you have arranged your body the church exactly as you wanted it to be that you've given each one of us different gifts and abilities and roles and i pray and ask that you would help us to be content with the one that you've given us and to see how we can use it for your glory in the church and in the community that we live in we ask in jesus name amen