

# **Does God Heal Today?**

**William F. Dankenbring**

**What is the truth about divine healing? Is God Our Healer? What about doctors, drugs, and medicines? Does God promise to heal His people every time they get sick, or come down with some infection or disease?**

**What do the Scriptures teach about God as our Divine Healer? What about healing "miracles"? What about hospitals, surgery, heart and other organ transplants?**

**As a Messianic believer in Yeshua, or as a Christian, what should you do when sick? What about the "prayer of faith" that "saves" the sick? Here is vital Biblical truth you need to know!**

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## Chapter One

# What's All This about DIVINE HEALING?

In the last healing booklet he wrote, Herbert W. Armstrong made a serious warning, if not a prophetic statement. He declared:

"To say there is no such thing as physical sin, as has been said by self-professing intellectuals, is NOT intellectual -- it is rank STUPIDITY, IGNORANCE or WILLFUL PERVERSION of PLAIN, SIMPLE *T R U T H!*" (*The Plain Truth about Healing*, 1979, page 47).

But in a major article on healing in the *Worldwide News* in 1987, just one year after Herbert Armstrong's death, Joseph Tkach wrote -- or to be more accurate, Dr. Kyrios Stavronides wrote the article, but Tkach took credit for it, and it appeared under his by-line -- the following:

". . . to violate or transgress God's law of love is sin. But laws governing the physical operation of the creation, of themselves, have NOTHING TO DO WITH SIN. Sin is the violation of spiritual law. . . .

"Violating laws or principles of health will produce a harmful or detrimental result. It is a matter of cause and effect. But it is not what the Bible defines as sin."

### *No Physical Sin?*

Either Herbert W. Armstrong was right -- or Joseph Tkach is right. Which? Both teachings cannot be right, for they mutually contradict each other. One of them has to be dead wrong. Amazingly, this new definition of "sin" and fundamental change in the healing doctrine took place just one year after Herbert Armstrong's death!

What does Tkach mean when he says there is no such thing as "physical sin"? Of course, we know that God's law is spiritual (Rom.7:12, 14). Violation of His spiritual Law, including the Ten Commandments, or any point of His Law, is transgression of that Law -- and "sin IS," by definition, "transgression of the law" (I John 3:4).

If a Christian deliberately violated the "Seven Laws of Radiant Health," as Herbert Armstrong called them, and ate no food, drank no water, or other liquids; if he took no exercise, got no sleep at night, received no fresh air or sunshine; and if he deliberately injured his body,

that person would be committing suicide!

If a Christian imbibes no spiritual food, does not drink in of the Holy Spirit, does not exercise himself spiritually in obeying the commandments of God, and cuts himself off from the source of righteousness, Almighty God -- he would be committing spiritual suicide!

Transgression of the physical laws of God will result in physical death. Transgression of the spiritual laws of God will result in spiritual death -- for all eternity!

How clear it should be that the physical is a TYPE of the spiritual! To say, therefore, that there is no such thing as "physical sin," is nothing more than perverted hogwash and balderdash! It is doctrinal swill, fit only for the hogs to slop and wallow in!

Consider for a moment. Jesus Christ used physical ailments and sicknesses such as deafness, dumbness, blindness, and lameness, as types of spiritual maladies or conditions. Jesus said to the Pharisees who asked why He ate and drank with the tax collectors and sinners, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32).

Here Jesus Christ compares physical health with spiritual health, an analogy that is perfect. Furthermore, Jesus upbraids the Laodicean Church for its wickedness and lukewarmness, spiritually. In so doing, He once again uses the analogy of physical sickness to portray the spiritual sickness which debilitated them. He declared to this woe-begone, self-sufficient church of the End-Time, "But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy of me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see" (Rev.3:17-18).

The prophet Isaiah also uses the physical as a type of the spiritual. Lambasting Israel for her spiritual sins, for departing from God's Law, Isaiah writes, "Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.

"Why should you be beaten any more? Why do you persist in REBELLION?"

"Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness -- only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil" (Isa.1:4-6).

Isaiah wrote, "Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep. They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they are all turned to their own way, each seeks his own gain" (Isa.56:10-11).

Physical blindness is a type of spiritual blindness; physical deafness is a type of spiritual

unwillingness to hear God's voice; physical lameness is a type of spiritual lameness.

Paul writes in the book of Hebrews, "Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 'Make level paths for your feet,' (so you do not stumble and fall), so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather HEALED" (Hebrews 12:12-13).

Paul isn't talking about physical healing here, or physical infirmities -- he is talking about SPIRITUAL sickness and weakness! In context, he is talking about receiving spiritual chastisement and correction from God, spiritual discipline, to help us to change our lives so that we will produce "a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb.12:11). God disciplines us for our spiritual good, "that we may share in his holiness" (v.10). Therefore, spiritually speaking, we are to strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees and have our spiritual "lameness" to be healed.

Therefore, it is certainly a Biblical principle to call sickness a PHYSICAL TYPE of the malady of SIN! Even as physical illnesses such as fever, bronchitis, flu, cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, emphysema, cholera, typhoid fever, measles, mumps, bubonic plague, afflict the human body, and can even lead to a horrible death, and are often the result of breaking God's laws of health and well-being, even so the spiritual "illness" of disobedience to God's spiritual laws can lead also to DEATH -- eternal death in the Lake of Fire!

Physical illness is a perfect analogy of spiritual SIN! Therefore, physical "sins," or transgressions of physical health laws are a PERFECT TYPE of "spiritual sins," or transgressions of God's SPIRITUAL Law!

In what more graphic, compelling way could God Almighty picture for us the hideous consequences of sin? Since that which is spiritual is invisible (II Cor.4:18), God has portrayed it for us in the physical world, so we can see, grasp and understand by comparison the hideous effects of spiritual SIN!

By denying the parallel between breaking physical health laws and the resultant sickness, and breaking spiritual laws, and the penalty of sin, we obscure the true nature of SIN. Sin becomes less sinful. It becomes of no real, lasting consequence, in our minds. It becomes fuzzy, muddled, like a vague mirage. It loses its real, palpable, deathly significance. It becomes a chimera, a dream, a fantasy-scape, something we can treat lightly.

Who is it that best benefits from this obfuscation of the reality of sin? Certainly, it is not us human beings! We have everything to lose by losing sight of the reality of sin. For Paul wrote, "The wages of SIN is DEATH"(Rom.6:23). Who, then, is the arch deceiver, who seeks to enslave mankind in sin and wickedness, in order to *destroy* all mankind?

No one has a greater vested interest in achieving this spiritual blindness and deafness in us than Satan the devil! It is Satan the devil who seeks to confuse the issue, and blot out the consciousness of sin and its awesome reality! What better way to do this than to DENY the very existence of "sin" on the physical, mundane, earthly level?

How clever our adversary is!

### *Satan's Great Lie*

Sicknesses often come upon us because we have violated a physical law of health. Since there are physical "laws" in existence regulating health, then there must of necessity be physical "sin," which is simply the "transgression" of those laws. The word "sin," itself, simply means to "miss the mark," "to err," "to come up short."

Therefore, when ministers who supposedly represent the Church of God begin to put a "twist" on the definition of sin, a certain "spin" on the ball, you can rest assured that it will not act right, according to what you would expect. These devious acts are intended to deceive and to lead astray from the simplicity of the TRUTH of God!

Joseph Tkach says, "But the laws governing the physical operation of the creation of themselves have nothing to do with sin."

Balderdash! Poppycock!

If Herbert Armstrong were alive today, he would shake the halls with fierce denunciation and thunder "Blasphemy" at the words of Joseph Tkach!

According to the Word of God, the PHYSICAL WORLD is a TYPE of the spiritual world! Therefore, there must be sin in the physical world, even as there is sin in the spiritual world! To deny sin in the physical realm is tantamount to really denying sin in the spiritual realm! To deny the very existence of the entity of "sin" is the most diabolical and clever trick that Satan the devil can foist off upon an unsuspecting, disingenuous Church!

The apostle Paul wrote plainly: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because *God made it plain to them.*"

"For since the CREATION of the world [the physical creation] God's INVISIBLE qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been CLEARLY SEEN, *being understood from what has been made,* so that men are *without excuse*" (Rom.1:18-20).

Did you get that? Read it again, slowly, carefully. The physical creation REVEALS to us that which is invisible; in other words, the physical was created to show us the SPIRITUAL! We learn about the spiritual, invisible, unseen realm by studying the physical realm! God has used this method, He says, to make the truth "plain to them." He did this so that the truth could be "clearly seen," and that there would be no question about it! This means that those who deny this truth, according to God's own Word, are simply *"without excuse"*! They don't have a "leg" to stand on!

### *Satan's Diabolical Attack*

By attacking the very definition of SIN, and what it is, Satan has very cleverly and

powerfully struck at the very core doctrine of the Church of God! He has gone straight for the jugular vein, or the eyes, in order to kill in one stroke and to blind God's people, spiritually.

If the pivotal premise of a doctrine is flawed, then the entire doctrine is seriously flawed.

If the central doctrine of the Church is flawed, then the spiritual consequences are truly frightening.

For years, Herbert W. Armstrong used to use the analogy of gravity to illustrate the principle of physical sin. If you fell from the top of the Empire State Building, whether by accident or purpose, you would make a "great splash" on Broadway below. Your human body would be literally destroyed, smashed beyond recognition, with no hope for survival. To do such a thing would be a violation of the laws of health and safety! The result of such a "sin" would be catastrophic -- a grisly DEATH!

Some have confused the issue by saying that the law of gravity, which would pull you down to your death, is not being "violated" in this instance. It acts the same under all circumstances. You would actually be OBEYING the law of gravity -- not "breaking the law of gravity." But this cunning argument misses the entire point. Customarily, we may speak of "breaking the law of gravity" by doing such a thing, but what we are REALLY breaking is the law of health and safety that in effect says, "Don't fall from high buildings."

Similarly, we tell small children, "Don't put your hand on a hot stove." If they break this law of health, they could become scalded by boiling water, or burn their hands by touching a hot surface! We also tell children, "Don't run out into the street." If they fail to obey this simple health and safety law, they could be run over by a car or truck, and be killed or severely maimed! Auto accidents alone kill over 40,000 Americans every year -- the total number is more than the total of all wars we have fought since the Revolutionary War!

The point is, there are laws in the physical world, and if we break them, we could be severely injured or DIE! To break them is to "miss the mark," to transgress them -- and the penalty is sickness, injury, suffering, and PHYSICAL DEATH! Even so, physical death, which is the result of "physical sin," is a TYPE of spiritual death -- the result of SPIRITUAL sin!

Can't we understand this simple and God-inspired analogy, or type?

To make the diabolical claim that there is no such thing as "physical sin" is really tantamount to saying that there is no such thing as "spiritual sin"! It is erasing the existence of SIN altogether, and calling sin void, cancelled out, abolished, non-existent!

What is the significance of that?

The bottom line is that such a philosophy only leads in one direction -- THE ABOLITION OF SIN MEANS THE ABOLITION OF LAW! It means you may now do as you please, live as you choose, break all the laws you want -- for there is NO SUCH THING AS PHYSICAL (OR SPIRITUAL) SIN, ANYWAY!

Truly, the devil is a clever creature! The apostle Paul wrote, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you receive, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough" (II Cor.11:3-4).

Changing the definition of SIN is tantamount to preaching a "different Jesus" -- a smart-alec young man who came to DO AWAY WITH His Father's Law! It is tantamount to receiving a "different Spirit" -- because God only gives His Holy Spirit to those who OBEY Him (Acts 5:32)! It is also tantamount to preaching a DIFFERENT GOSPEL -- a gospel that does away with "works" and commandment-keeping, and says you can be saved "by grace through faith ALONE"!

How diabolical! How clever! How ingenious!

Herbert Armstrong, to his dying day, did not compromise on the definition of what constitutes "sin."

But Joseph Tkach has.

Herbert Armstrong saw through the sham, bogus arguments of supposedly clever "intellectuals" who claimed there is "no such thing as physical sin." He accused them of "rank STUPIDITY, IGNORANCE," or even "WILLFUL PERVERSION OF PLAIN, SIMPLE TRUTH!"

He was absolutely right!

It should be obvious even to a school-age child that there are such things as physical sins in a physical world -- sins which result in physical injury, sickness, or even death. Smoking cigarettes would be such a sin. Over 400,000 Americans die annually from smoking cigarettes! The cigarette smoking, over years, causes diseases such as cancer, heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis, and leads in many cases to a horrible death!

To claim that smoking cigarettes -- a physical act -- is not a physical "sin," considering the damage it does to human health, the lungs, and bodily tissues, is a totally unwarranted conclusion. It purports that since smoking is not a "sin," therefore, it must be ALL RIGHT -- a decision you must make on your own -- your own CHOICE!

Isn't this the very reasoning Eve fell for in the garden of Eden when tempted by the serpent?

### *Eve and the Wily Serpent*

We read in the book of Genesis:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals

the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God *really* say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'

"The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." '

" 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened; and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Gen.3:1-7).

Notice Satan's "lie" here. He told the woman she would not "die," if she sinned -- that is, ate the forbidden fruit! He, in effect, said to her, "There is no physical sin involved here. The fruit is good for you. Go ahead eat it -- it won't kill you. *There is no such thing as physical sin!*"

The woman, naive and inexperienced, was gullible, and believed Satan's lie. No physical sin! Merely eating a fig, or piece of fruit, won't hurt her! She was enticed to use human reason. Why, the tree looked nice; the fruit looked tasty and delicious. Besides, the serpent told her it would even make her WISE! The more she thought about it, the more desirable the fruit became in her own mind. She believed the devil's lies, and disobeyed a PHYSICAL law of God, which also led to the breaking of a spiritual law -- the Ten Commandments!

Notice! She merely ate a piece of fruit which had been forbidden. But the spiritual law of God, the Ten Commandments, did not state that this particular piece of fruit from this particular tree was evil. But she was told by God not to eat it. Therefore, she broke a physical law of God, governing this particular tree and its fruit. She also broke the Ten Commandments, when she violated the direct word of her "Father," God, and dishonored her parent. She also put the word of the devil ahead of the word of God, and so committed "idolatry." She sinned, both physically AND spiritually!

### ***The Many Faces of Sin***

The same thing is true when people "smoke" cigarettes, chew tobacco, or dip snuff. They endanger their lives, and shorten their physical days, and bring punishment upon their bodies. But they also break God's spiritual law which says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore HONOR GOD with your body" (I Cor.6:19-20).

You do not "honor God" by smoking cigarettes, or taking hard drugs, smoking marijuana, shooting heroin, snorting cocaine, or popping pills! Such physical actions are nothing less than PHYSICAL SINS which lead to PHYSICAL PENALTIES, the chief of which is premature and often painful, excruciating physical DEATH!

Violating ANY of the laws of God - whether they are laws of physics, chemistry, biology, nutrition, or health -- constitutes SIN in the sight of God! Breaking any of these laws which govern the universe leads to cataclysm and catastrophe -- on a personal level -- or if widespread enough, on a universal level!

Arsenic may smell like almonds, but if you eat it, if you ingest it, *you will die!* Looks can be deceiving in the physical world, just as they can be in the spiritual realm!

It may seem like "fun" driving a Porsche at 140 miles per hour. But if you have an accident, and go off the road and hit a tree or a brick wall, your body will be a mangled mess and your life will be forfeit. The result of physical sin is physical injury and DEATH!

It may seem like "fun" to a soldier or a pilot to shoot an atomic cannon or drop a nuclear bomb on a target -- but the penalty for unjust wars is still MASSIVE DEATH, with thousands or millions being maimed, burned, cremated, or killed through lingering radiation sickness!

Let's get this straight. *Sin is sin -- whether it is physical OR spiritual!*

Some sins are both physical AND spiritual. Physical sins exact physical penalties, even as spiritual sins exact spiritual penalties. For example, the apostle Paul wrote: "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually *sins against his own body*" (I Cor.6:18). When a person breaks one of the Ten Commandments, he sins against God, or other people. However, when he commits adultery, or sexual sin -- one of the Ten commandments -- he sins against himself, as well as the sexual partner. His own body may suffer the consequences of sexual disease, herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, or even the dreaded AIDS!

Likewise, when a person smokes, takes drugs, or drinks too much alcoholic beverage, and gets drunk, he sins against his own body -- a physical sin. He damages himself. But if he crashes a car while attempting to drive while drunk, he could kill himself, or other innocent people!

As Paul wrote: "The wages of sin is *death*" Rom.6:23). Let us not "minimize" the horrendous effects of sin -- whether it is physical or spiritual. Sin is sin -- and sin is horrible! Denying the existence of physical sin is just another way of minimizing sin and its lethal consequences. It's like children playing with a loaded gun -- a loaded revolver.

### ***The Definition of "SIN"***

Nowhere in the Word of God does God specifically categorize sin. He does not really differentiate between physical and spiritual sins. No such distinction is made. In God's eyes, all

sin is sin, whether spiritual or physical.

The Biblical definition of sin is found in the first epistle of John, who wrote: "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, SIN IS LAWLESSNESS" (I John 3:4).

Paul wrote, "The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are all summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom.13:8-10).

The essence of God's law is love toward God, toward your neighbor, and toward yourself. It is not wrong to love yourself. In fact, we are commanded to love ourselves -- but to love our neighbor just as much!

If you truly love your neighbor, you won't do anything to hurt him. Similarly, if you truly love yourself, you won't practice noxious and loathsome habits that destroy your own body, mind and mental and physical health!

The truth is, we cannot separate between physical sin and spiritual sin. Both lead to death, and both are involved whenever we break ANY of God's laws. Nowhere does God's Word make any distinction between the two kinds of sin -- what it all boils down to is that SIN IS SIN! If we belong to Christ, then we "have been set free from sin" (Rom.6:22). "For the wages of sin is DEATH, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verse 23).

The word "sin" itself is informative. The Hebrew word for sin means "an offence," and comes from the root meaning "to miss." The Greek word for sin is *hamartano* and means "to miss the mark," "to err," "to offend." It should be obvious to anyone that we can "miss the mark" either physically, or spiritually, or both!

King Saul sinned by not following through in annihilating the Amalekites as God told him to (I Sam.15:1-3). He saved the donkeys, cattle and sheep alive, as well as their king -- everything that he considered "good" (verses 7-9). God's prophet rebuked Saul, saying, "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in OBEYING the voice of the LORD? To OBEY is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For REBELLION is like the sin of divination [witchcraft!], and arrogance like the evil of idolatry" (I Sam.15:22-23).

Doing anything that harms yourself or others is SIN -- it violates the laws of God -- it goes against the commandment of God to love your neighbor as yourself. The only exception to this is when God Himself commands one to destroy God's enemy, like the Amalekites. In this case, they deserved death in the sight of God, and God used human instruments to carry out His punishment upon them!

Samuel told Saul, "Because you have REJECTED THE WORD of the LORD, he has rejected you as king" (verse 23). Saul lost his kingship because of disobedience -- sin! If we sin,

we can lose our kingship and crown in the World Tomorrow, as well as our claim to God's promise of everlasting life! Jesus Christ warned the Church at Philadelphia, "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Rev.3:11).

Anyone who would seduce us into sin, who would inveigle us into transgressing ANY of God's Laws, whether physical OR spiritual, could cause us to lose our crown of righteousness! Are you going to allow some minister -- even Joseph Tkach himself -- to *steal your* crown?

God is a God of perfect Law and Order. His physical Creation also is run by impeccable laws and rules. It is a type of the Spiritual. If we hope to enter the Kingdom of God, then we must obey ALL God's Laws ordained for our good! The very essence and definition of God's own character is "Law." His Word is His Law.

Anyone who therefore fosters the breaking of physical laws is encouraging rebellion against the Most High God -- a sin which is like witchcraft in its seriousness and enormity!

What could be clearer than that?

### ***What Did Jesus Mean?***

In chapter 2 of the *Worldwide News* seven part series of articles on "The Plain Truth about Healing," the author states his so-called "proof" that there is no such thing as physical sin.

Notice!

In Mark 2:5 we read, " 'When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.' " The article stated about this verse:

"Christ could not be referring to the forgiveness of 'physical sin,' for at that instant the man did not yet get up. Something he would have been able to do immediately had Christ's statement been the same as a pronouncement of healing" (*WN*, Feb.29, 1988).

Let's analyze that devious statement. Notice! The author admits that Christ was only referring to spiritual sins here, since he claims no physical type of sin exists. Therefore, if Christ had not been questioned by the scribes, the man would have had his spiritual sins forgiven -- but he would have remained paralyzed.

Clearly, the spiritual healing in Mark 2:5 was separate from the physical healing -- just as Herbert Armstrong always taught!

However, the one was obviously the type of the other -- which Christ proves by His statement that follows. When the Pharisees accused Him of blasphemy, by claiming to forgive sins, Christ responded:

'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the

paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may KNOW that the Son of Man has AUTHORITY on earth to FORGIVE SINS . . . .' He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!' " (Mar.2:8-12).

Notice what Jesus did! To prove to these doubting Pharisees that He could forgive sins, and had this divine authority, He told the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home"!

Obviously, this settled the matter for the Pharisees, the "doctors" of the law. They knew that if Christ could heal this man, then He was forgiving the man's physical sins that brought on the ailment. Jesus used this PHYSICAL HEALING as a demonstration of FORGIVENESS OF SIN! This shows that sickness is often the result of human sins and violations of God's law, and when these violations are forgiven, HEALING is the result!

Mark 2, therefore, offers no proof that physical sin does not exist. Rather, it implies very strongly the very opposite! Rather than deny the existence of physical sins leading to or causing paralysis, this Scripture strongly implies that the man's illness was DUE to physical sin -- because Jesus related the two concepts in His healing of the man. He said, 1) "Your sins are forgiven," and 2), "Get up, take up your bed and WALK home!" Jesus connected the two things together!

Isn't that very simple and plain? Even a child could understand it! How then could Joseph Tkach use this Scripture as sole "proof" of his claim that there is no such thing as physical sin?

### *New Testament Healing Examples*

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are HEALED. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken" (Isa.53:5-8).

Jesus was beaten, bled, and died for our sins -- both physical AND spiritual! By the wounds He suffered, and His final death, He paid the penalty of ALL SIN! He took ALL our transgressions, ALL our iniquities, upon Himself. Therefore, even the physical sins that lead to physical injury, illness, suffering, and disease, were FORGIVEN and taken by Christ upon His own body, as our Sacrifice for sins!

Paul explained, "God made him who had no sin TO BE SIN FOR US, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Cor.5:21).

"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was

sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him" (Heb.9:27-28).

Peter wrote plainly: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been HEALED. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (I Pet.2:24-25).

Christ's Sacrifice on our behalf pays the penalty of ALL our sins, including physical sins and spiritual sins. He paid the price for the breaking and transgressions of ALL the laws of God, both in the physical realm of the universe, and in the spiritual, invisible realm that we cannot see or perceive.

Among the promises that Christ gave us was physical and spiritual forgiveness! If we obey His laws, God tells us, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the DISEASES I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD *who heals you*" (Exodus 15:26).

One of God's very names is "*Yahveh-Ropheka*" -- "The LORD Who Heals You!"

Further, David exclaimed about God's healing power and might, "Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- who forgives all your sins and HEALS all your diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3).

Here again we see *forgiveness of sin* in close juxtaposition with *healing of diseases!* They go together like hand and glove, like tea and crumpets, like hash browns and eggs! They are very closely related.

One of God's wonderful promises, in the Millennium, is to heal human sicknesses and afflictions. Isaiah prophesied, "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'

"Then will the eyes of the BLIND be opened and the ears of the DEAF unstopped. Then will the LAME leap like a deer, and the MUTE tongue shout for joy" (Isa.35:3-6).

At His first coming, in one day Jesus Christ raised a girl from the dead (Matt.9:18-25), healed a woman with a long-term blood hemorrhage (verse 20-22), healed two blind men at one time (verses 27-29), cast out a demon from a man who was mute, enabling him to speak (verses 32-33), and healed a paralytic man (verses 1-7), mentioned before.

After this, we read, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and HEALING EVERY DISEASE AND SICKNESS" (Matt.9:35).

If healing is so unimportant, why is the New Testament saturated with examples of Christ healing the sick? Why was this gift also common in the early Church, and often mentioned in the book of Acts?

In Acts we read, "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. . . . As a result, people brought the *sick* into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least *Peter's shadow* might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were HEALED" (Acts 5:12-16).

The truth is, healing is often the forgiveness of physical sin -- and it is very important in God's sight. Among the commissions Jesus gave His Church was:

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whosoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will pick up snakes with their hands [accidentally of course]; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; *they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well*" (Mark 16:15-18).

God used the apostle Paul to do fantastic healings even when he wasn't in the presence of the person being healed! Luke records in Acts, "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:11-12).

The power to heal others is a gift of the Spirit of God. Paul wrote, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one 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 prophecy . . . All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines" (I Cor.12:4-11).

Paul later asks these same Corinthians, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues [foreign languages]? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts" (I Cor.12:29-31).

The gift of healing the sick was to exist among the ministry of God. Jesus said so! He even commanded his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach, "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give*" (Matt.10:7-8). They were not to charge money for these services to the public. The gospel was to go forth free, and even the miracles and signs were to accompany the message and be free!

Jesus Christ is the same always. Paul wrote, "Jesus Christ is *the same*, yesterday and

today and forever" (Heb.13:8). Jesus Himself said, "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Rev.1:17-18). God Himself says, "I the LORD *do not change*. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" (Malachi 3:6).

God does not change. Christ is the SAME, forever. He healed the sick 1900 years ago. He heals the sick TODAY! His character is unchanging, complete, perfect, and forever. But, as Jesus told the two blind men who sought healing in His day, "According to your faith will it be done to you" (Matt.9:29).

The apostle James declares for the Church of God today, or for any who have real faith in the promises of God: "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be HEALED. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:14-16).

Luke, who was a physician, was used by God to record more of the healings of Jesus than any other witness. Is this not because as a professional medical man, Luke's account of the authenticity of Christ's healings gives them added credibility?

## Chapter Two

# Does God *ALWAYS* Promise to Heal?

Is healing an irrevocable, ironclad promise of God that we can depend on whenever we or a loved one becomes sick? If so, then why have so many died? Does God make "empty promises"? Or is there more to it than that?

Jesus Christ linked healing with the Church's great commission. Christ healed. He then worked and healed through His apostles and disciples. Yet, in the new Healing booklet of the Worldwide Church of God, on page 16, Exodus 15:26 is quoted -- the first part, where God says He will not put the sicknesses of the Egyptians upon His own people, if they keep His commandments. But -- without any explanation -- without any indication that this has been done -- without an ellipsis to show omission -- the most important part of the verse is LEFT OUT!

The part left out is --

***". . . for I am the LORD that HEALS YOU"!***

Strange, isn't it? The author of the booklet then boldly claims,

"Actually, we find here a promise not to afflict with illness, *rather than a promise to heal*" (*Plain Truth about Healing*, 1988, p.16).

Now, is that really honest?

The Worldwide Church of God used to condemn Ellen G. White's misuse of Isaiah 24:6 because she quoted only the first part of the verse in her book *The Great Controversy*. She quoted, "Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up." She then went on to claim the entire earth would be a desolate wilderness, a bleak desolation, for 1,000 years, without any inhabitants left upon it. But what does the last part of this verse clearly state?

***". . . and VERY FEW are left"!***

Isn't the Worldwide Church of God now GUILTY of the very same kind of dishonest fraud that they for years accused Ellen G. White of committing?

To omit the last part of the verse in Exodus 15:26 is nothing else but a knowing and

*deliberate distortion* of God's Word -- a spiritual FRAUD!

God is going to hold certain people very accountable. I would truly hate and fear and tremble to be in their shoes!

But, does God ALWAYS promise to HEAL us when we, or a loved one, becomes sick?

Are His healing promises iron-clad, and absolutely guaranteed, every time we become sick or afflicted?

Let's understand this very important point!

A very dear friend of mine, a woman of a tender heart and beautiful attitude toward her husband and others, came down with a horrible affliction -- cancer. Yet God allowed her to be stricken down with this fateful disease. She was a woman of faith -- and kindness and love and concern for others.

After suffering terribly for about a year, she finally succumbed to the ravages of cancer, and died. Of course she died in faith. We all know that. We know that this disease was not some punishment upon her for any imagined evil that she had done.

But WHY did God allow such a thing to happen? Why did He not heal her? Many seem to think that God has made an ironclad promise in His Word to HEAL us whenever we become sick. But is this really always true? Obviously, many have died in faith -- and not been healed!

How can we understand this apparent paradox?

We know that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) . We know also that God is our Divine Healer (Exodus 15:26 ). Then WHY do some righteous people become sick, and die?

Let's boldly examine this question, and search the Word of God for His answer!

### *Elisha the Prophet*

Now the prophet Elisha was truly a mighty man of God, a man of tremendous faith. When he began his ministry, he prayed for a double portion of the Spirit of God that Elijah had, and God gave it (II Kings 2:9-12). When he then struck the Jordan river with Elijah's cloak, the waters parted so he could walk across! (verses 13-15).

Elisha performed many great miracles with the power of God. He healed bad waters by pouring a bowl of salt in them (vs.19-22). When young boys mocked him because of his baldness, he cursed them, and two female bears killed 42 of them on the spot (vs.23-24).

He foretold water would fill a dry valley, without there being wind or rain, and even though the Israeli army was on the point of perishing for lack of water, Elisha's prophecy came to pass, as well as his prophesied victory over the enemy (II Kings 3:16-27). He saved the two

sons of a widow from becoming slaves to her creditor by miraculously filling all available pots and pans and jars with olive oil to pay the debt, and the oil kept flowing until they ran out of jars (II Kings 4:1-7).

Elisha even prophesied that a barren, childless couple would have a young son in a year's time, and it came to pass (II Kings 4:15-17). Later, when the young boy died, God used Elisha to bring the child back to life from the dead -- surely, a miracle all would acknowledge as being great (II Kings 4:15-37).

Was Elisha a man of faith? Of course he was. Was he a dedicated man of God? Absolutely. He also healed a poisonous pot of stew by throwing in a few handfuls of cornmeal, and one time when they had only a sack of fresh grain and twenty small loaves of bread, Elisha used it to feed *one hundred men* -- and there was plenty left over to spare! (II Kings 4:38-44).

One of the great miracles of Elisha was that he cured a famous Syrian general, Naaman, commander-in-chief of the Syrian armies, of leprosy by simply telling him to go dip in the Jordan river seven times. At first the general was angry, and refused, the very idea seemed so stupid. Finally his officers prevailed upon him to follow the simple instructions of the prophet; and when he did, lo and behold -- his skin came as healthy as a little child's, and he was totally *healed* (II Kings 5).

Elisha caused the miracle of an iron ax head to float in water (II Kings 6:1-7). One time he prayed, and God blinded a WHOLE ARMY of Syrian troops, and they became prisoners of war (II Kings 6:8-23).

Consider the miraculous power and ability of this man. Elisha did miracles such as no man since Moses had done -- only the miracles of Elijah in the old Testament could be compared with those of Elisha.

When a great famine came upon Israel, Elisha foretold that the very next day there would be plenty of food, so that two gallons of flour or four gallons of barley grain would sell in the markets of Samaria for the equivalent of a dollar, today. Although this seemed preposterous, it happened, just as Elisha predicted (II Kings 6:24-33; 7:1-20). And, just as Elisha predicted, the man who refused to believe was trampled in the dust under the feet of those rushing to get at all the suddenly provided food! (II Kings 7:2, 17-20).

Elisha later predicted a seven year famine on Israel (II Kings 8:1-2), which came to pass.

Surely, everybody would admit that here was a mighty prophet of God, indeed. A man who was used to perform the most spectacular miracles. Truly Elisha was a man of faith!

This man knew God. He knew God's promises. He had personal, intimate, close contact with Almighty God. He obeyed the laws of God. Surely he knew that *if* God had made a PROMISE to heal us whenever we become sick, and he knew that God could never break a promise, then Elisha would certainly have claimed such a promise, when he became sick, wouldn't he? Doesn't that stand to right? If Elisha ever became sick, then he would have

claimed that certain "promise of healing" God had made, and he -- of all people -- certainly had the FAITH to be healed, so it follows invariably that he would have been HEALED!

Right?

*Wrong!*

The truth is, we read of this incredible man, this mighty worker of miracles, this man of awesome faith and spiritual power -- we read: "Now Elisha (previously) had become ill of *the illness of which he died*" (II Kings 13:14).

Yes, Elisha became sick -- and *DIED!*

But even on his death-bed, he never lost faith in God. Even as a king of Israel wept over him, he performed another great MIRACLE! He told the king to shoot an arrow out the window, and then to smash and stamp on the remaining arrows, as a sign that he would smite the Syrians in battle (II Kings 13:14-19).

### ***"Save" Versus "Heal"***

When you get right down to it, the only Scripture most people can turn to in an attempt to "prove" that God *promises* healing today, in this life, when we are sick -- is James 5:14-15. However, you should note carefully that the word "PROMISE," or "I PROMISE" is *nowhere* used in these verses!

Furthermore, in the very next verse, showing that healing is NOT certain, as if it were a matter of God merely fulfilling a definite promise, James himself goes on to say, "pray one for another, that ye MAY be healed." Does this sound like an ironclad *promise?* -- or a *possibility?*

The word "may" -- according to the Dictionary -- means simply "be permitted or allowed to," "to be possible that it will," "it is hoped that." The dictionary explains that the word "may" is used to express contingency, condition, concession, purpose, result and the like. The use of such a word plainly shows that God MAY or MIGHT heal -- not that He has to, has bound Himself to, or surely WILL heal!

Isn't that clear? The Bible does NOT contradict itself. If God meant that healing was SURE, certain, merely a matter of fulfilling a definite PROMISE, then He would have said so!

But even in this most-used verse to attempt to show God's healing "promise," we find exceptions, "maybes," conditional inferences, and possibility, rather than certainty.

But notice further. In verse 15 we read that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick." What does this mean? Does this, as many assume, refer to HEALING? If so, then why didn't James simply use the word "heal the sick," and make it plain?

The Greek word James uses here is *sozo* and means "to save, i.e., deliver or protect." It is

used in I Timothy 1:15 where Jesus Christ "came into the world to *save sinners*." It is used in Hebrews 5:7 and 7:25, as "save him from death" and "save them to the uttermost" -- in reference to *salvation*. James himself uses it in James 1:21, "the engrafted word, which is able to *save* your souls." James also asks, of one who has faith without works, "can faith *save* him?" (James 2:14). Here again it is the same Greek word. And in James 4:12 we read, "There is one lawgiver who is able to *save* and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

The most commonly used Greek word for "heal," used throughout the New Testament, is *therapeuo*, which is the root of our English word *therapeutic* and *therapy*. It means, "to wait upon menially, i.e. to *relieve* (of disease); cure, heal, worship." The other Greek word used specifically for "heal," is *iaomai* and means simply "to cure, heal, make whole." The word *therapeuo* is used 35 times in the New Testament, translated "heal" or "healed." The word *iaomai* is used 26 times, translated the same way.

How clearly, then, if James had meant to say "HEAL" in James 5:15, he would have used a different word! Clearly, he was not necessarily referring to healing at all, but to being *saved* -- SALVATION!

The truth is, the word *sozo* is translated "save" 41 times in the New Testament, and "saved" 53 times. It is translated in the King James Version "heal" only 3 times, and the Revised Standard Version in these three instances uses the word "save" instead, as it is a more accurate translation. Those three instances are found in Mark 5:23, Luke 8:36 and Acts 14:9. In Mark 5:23 the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, was really asking Jesus to save the life of his young daughter -- not just to heal her. She was "at the point of death."

Luke 8:36 refers to a man who was a wild man, possessed of many demons, which Jesus cast out. He was not sick, or suffering from any illness or disease, but went about naked, abiding in the tombs (v.27). Jesus cast the demons out of him, and allowed them to enter a herd of swine, which they immediately drove over a cliff and into the sea (vs.32-33). Again, the word "healed" in verse 36, from the Greek *sozo*, should more accurately be translated "saved" as it is in the RSV.

In the third instance, in the book of Acts, the apostle Paul saw a certain man at Lystra, "impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be SAVED [Greek *sozo*, "healed," is not the best translation, but is too limiting -- rather, Paul detected that this man *believed* what he was saying, *believed* the gospel, had *saving* faith -- but obviously, the man had no idea about "healing" as such, for Paul had not even broached the subject or mentioned "healing" in his discourse], said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked" (Acts 14:8-10) .

This man, like the lame man in the Temple healed by Peter and John (Acts 3:1-8), had no idea at all about healing. He was merely listening intently to the words of Paul, to the sermon he was preaching, and Paul could tell from the expression on his face that he *believed* the message about Christ as Savior. Paul then, at the urging of the Holy Spirit within him, used this man as an example of the power of God, as a witness to all the others standing about, some of whom

were only half-listening, some of whom were distracted -- and some disbelieving. Paul performed this amazing miracle to get their attention, and to show the saving power of Christ. But, like the lame man in the third chapter of Acts -- this man had no idea in advance that Paul was going to supernaturally, miraculously HEAL him of his being crippled from birth!

Therefore, in the only three instances where the word *sozo* is translated "healed" in the New Testament, we see that it would be better translated "saved," as it is in every other instance - - that is, 94 times.

Even so, when it comes to personal healing of ourselves or a loved one, we should have the same attitude. We should confess the fact that *it may not be God's will* to heal in every case. And if it isn't -- if He has some greater purpose in mind -- then we should accept it, and be submissive to the perfect and supreme and all-knowing mind of God.

Like Paul, we should affirm, whether we are healed or not, "ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom.8:28).

Yes, God promises deliverance from our afflictions (Psalm 34:19). "The Lord delivereth him out of them all," David wrote, even though "many are the afflictions of the righteous."

But there may come a time, and sometimes does, when it is not God's will to deliver a person in a particular illness, or affliction, or circumstance -- but via the deliverance of death and resurrection.

Paul discusses this at length in Hebrews 11, the "faith chapter." He wrote, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were SLAIN with the sword" (Heb.11:37). They were not delivered! Many of the prophets were slain for the sake of the word of God. Jesus said, to Jerusalem, "Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee . . ." (Matt-23:37). They were not always delivered! Many died for Christ's sake, as martyrs, as examples, to serve the greater purpose of God, and they will surely receive their reward (Rev.20:4).

## Chapter Three

# The Example of Hezekiah

Now notice an astonishing event in the Scriptures -- the amazing illness of king Hezekiah, and what it reveals.

The prophet Isaiah records, "It was just before all this that Hezekiah became deathly sick and Isaiah the prophet (Amoz' son) went to visit him and gave him this message from the Lord: 'Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die: you will not recover from this illness'" (Isa.38:1).

It should be perfectly clear that *God did not promise* to heal Hezekiah from this illness. There was no "promise" of healing, as such, that Hezekiah could claim. Rather, God, the Divine Healer, promised him -- if anything -- that he was going to die and not recover from this illness! The Divine Healer said He would not heal him! This by itself proves that God *does not necessarily promise healing in this life*, for His people, even those who are righteous! Those who believe He does are begging the question and missing the point.

Let us continue the case history, straight from God's Word:

"When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed: 'O Lord, don't you remember how true I've been to you and how I've always tried to obey you in everything you said?'"

"Then he broke down with great sobs.

"So the Lord sent another message to Isaiah: 'Go and tell Hezekiah that the Lord God of your forefather David hears you praying and sees your tears and will let you live fifteen more years. He will deliver you and this city from the king of Assyria'" (Isa.38:2-6).

Because of Hezekiah's plea for mercy, God not only changed His mind, *and decided* to HEAL him, but *also* promised to save the entire city from foreign *invasion* and captivity during Hezekiah's own lifetime!

This proves we should never limit God's mercy -- or His Divine power. Isaiah records in another place, "Listen now! The Lord isn't too weak to save you. And he isn't getting deaf. He can hear you when you call! But the trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God. Because of sin he has turned his face away from you and will not listen anymore" (Isa.59:1-2) .

But Hezekiah was not "cut off" by His sins. God did hear him. Notice, now, what Hezekiah himself said about this dire sickness.

"My life is but half done and I must leave it all. I am robbed of my normal years, and now I must enter the gates of Sheol. Never again will I see the Lord in the land of the living. Never again will I see my friends in this world. My life is blown away like a shepherd's tent; it is cut short as when a weaver stops his working at the loom. In one short day my life hangs by a thread.

"All night I moaned; it was like being torn apart by lions. Delirious, I chattered like a swallow and mourned like a dove; my eyes grew weary of looking up for help. 'O God,' I cried, 'I am in trouble -- help me.' But what can I say? For he himself has SENT THIS SICKNESS. All my sleep has fled because of my soul's bitterness. O Lord, Your discipline is good and leads to life and health. Oh, heal me and make me live" (Isaiah 38:10-16).

Notice! Hezekiah *knew* that GOD HIMSELF sent this illness! It came from God! Rather than being his healer at this time, God was instead his afflicter -- his tormentor -- the very CAUSE of all his suffering!

When you become sick, do you realize that God Himself has allowed that precise and particular sickness to overtake you? Do you realize, as Hezekiah did, that sickness often is the direct result of God's heavenly *discipline*?

Notice Hezekiah's wonderful attitude. He continued: "Yes, now I see it all -- it was GOOD FOR ME to undergo this bitterness, for you have lovingly delivered me from death; you have forgiven all my sins. For dead men cannot praise you. They cannot be filled with hope and joy. The living, only the living, can praise you as I do today. One generation makes known your faithfulness to the next. Think of it! The Lord healed me!" (verses 17-20).

Hezekiah was healed due to the mercy of God. That is the simple beauty of this story. It was not his great faith. In fact, when Isaiah told Hezekiah's servants to make an ointment of figs and spread it over the boil, Hezekiah had the temerity to ask, "What sign will the Lord give me to prove that he will heal me?" (verses 21-22).

No, faith was not the key. God heard Hezekiah because he had been a good, righteous, sincere king -- a true worshiper of God. He heard him because He loved him, and decided to alter His Plan -- interrupt His divine Purpose -- and give this king fifteen more years to live. He heard him because He indeed is a God of mercy.

Divine *mercy* is the key!

This rich illustration from God's Word should teach us many valuable lessons about sickness and healing, and give us a deeper understanding about the cause of illness. Meditate on this example. Don't ever forget it!

### *Misapplying the Promises*

Many of God's people are just too sure of themselves. They assume God has promised things which He has not, and never did. For example, they read the words of Jesus to His disciples, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do . . . If ye shall ask *any thing* in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

Reading this, many assume that this promise surely includes healing, or whatever else we want. They look upon it as a blanket promise. It covers everything.

But is that true?

Jesus went on, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (verse 15). Obviously, if we ask anything contrary to the commandments of God, then, we could not love Christ, or really belong to Him -- and then we could not really ask "in His name," or by His divine authority! This means, then, that whatever we ask -- which this promise would apply to -- *must be in conformity to the commandments of God, in line with the will of God, and asked in accordance with the urging and moving of the Holy Spirit which God has given us* (Romans 8:26-28).

If we do not know if a certain thing we ask is God's will, under a particular circumstance, then we should admit it is so -- and not smugly assume something is God's will!

God desires *humility* on our part -- not spiritual pride and ego!

To prove this assertion, look at the example of the three friends of Daniel -- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When king Nebuchadnezzar threatened to throw them into the fiery blast furnace unless they would worship his gods, what did they reply? Did they act as if they knew God's will, when they did not? Notice!

They said to him,

"We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve IS ABLE to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he *will* deliver us out of thine hand, O king. *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan.3:16-18).

Notice! They said, "BUT *IF NOT*"! They admitted they did not know for sure. They *believed* God would deliver them -- but they admitted that He might not -- that He might have some greater purpose in mind -- and they were willing to DIE faithful to Him, whether He delivered them or not!

Therefore, like Jesus Christ our perfect example, we should always pray, "IF it be Thy will." To do that is not a lack of faith -- it is *a sign* of humility and submission to the overall will of God.

Therefore, *if* God is working out some special design in our illness, or affliction, and allows it to continue -- or even allows us or a loved one TO DIE -- then we must realize that possibility -- and we must be submissive to His will, as the Master Potter, no matter what happens.

Some *think* it is a lack of faith to say, "I know God *can* heal, but I don't know if He *will*, or if it is His will. That is not a lack of faith! That is merely facing reality. That is merely admission of a fact! If you grant that you know God CAN heal, and believe that He WILL heal, in His own time -- even if it is in the resurrection -- then -- make no bones about it -- you DO have faith!

What is faith, anyway?

### ***What IS Faith?***

Why is faith so misunderstood?

Paul wrote "for he that cometh to God MUST BELIEVE THAT HE *IS*, and that he is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him" (Heb.11:6). That is what faith is! In other words, faith is to believe in God, not in healing! Faith is to believe that GOD EXISTS, He is, and that no matter what happens in our lives, we believe that in the end He will REWARD us as we diligently seek Him and His ways!

Faith means we know God CAN heal -- and we know He is a God of love, mercy, and compassion! However, faith has nothing whatever to do with whether God will heal in a specific instance. We cannot know that. But we have faith that whatever He does, when we have prayed and done our best, it will be for the best!

Faith goes beyond healing. It represents our belief in God, in Christ, in His love and mercy and compassion, our belief in His supreme Power and Majesty -- that He indeed is GOD, the Eternal, Self-Existent Supreme Being, our Creator, our heavenly Father!

Paul wrote, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb.11:1). God is not seen. We cannot see God or feel Him, or discern Him by any of the physical senses. Yet we believe He is! -- He EXISTS! Likewise, we cannot see or feel the promises of God, in His Word -- yet we believe, we have faith, that God is true, He cannot lie, that His Word is completely reliable, that we can trust His promises and depend on His Word.

That belief, that trust, that dependence, is FAITH!

We have no physical evidence that we believe; our evidence is our FAITH ITSELF. Even so, when we get sick, we may and should believe that God in His mercy will heal us. That is fine. We should believe. But at the same time, we should accept in faith that whatever God allows to happen to us is for our best. If in a particular case He does not heal, we should accept the fact that He is working out His own unique plan in our lives, and that there must be a

tremendous purpose why He chooses to hold back on healing us! He may well have a special, Greater Purpose in our lives, which we may be only dimly aware of -- or even totally unaware of!

Do you understand? Our faith should be in GOD -- not in healing! Therefore, if in a given case He heals -- that is, of course, wonderful -- for He is our divine Healer (Exo.15:26). However, if He doesn't -- then He must have a very good reason. That reason, too, is for our own good -- even if we can't see it, humanly, at the time!

Thus faith allows us to submit to the will of God -- no matter what. It allows us to accept whatever happens as being allowed by God for our own perfection and instruction in righteousness, for the perfection of our character -- without complaining, moaning, groaning, or murmuring.

Faith allows us to learn *submission* to God, even if it seems contrary to our own temporary or temporal best wishes. Remember, God has eternity in view -- He plans with eternity in mind. We can only see eternity *as if* we are standing on the sand of the seashore, looking out at the horizon of the ocean. But eternity stretches out beyond our vision even as the sea extends far beyond the ability of our eyes to see.

With faith, therefore, there is no need to worry, or fret. Faith is not a human emotion, although it may indeed produce emotions or feelings as a consequence of having faith. Belief in God, and faith in Him, will lead one to experience the peace of acceptance, the tranquility of submission, the calmness of trust. Faith is not a struggle against physical evidence; it is merely a sublime trust in the *invisible* God and His Word. Our physical senses do not argue against faith -- not when we really understand God and His promises.

I can understand how one could become all anxious, worried and concerned, if they believe God has promised something which God has *not* necessarily promised. And then, when it does not come to pass, they are grief-stricken, and their "faith" is shattered! Such a false belief, or a false faith, may indeed cause great suffering, mental stress, and spiritual turmoil!

How many people have made shipwreck of their faith because they first of all believed something that God never really promised! They ASSUMED something because some man said God said or promised something, never for one minute questioning whether the man correctly understood that which he claimed came from the Word of God!

I have witnessed great tragedy because people *assumed* something that wasn't true. Some of them *assumed* God would heal a child, if all they did was believe -- and ask a minister to pray for the child. And they did not take the child to a doctor. And the child *DIED!*

What was their problem? Simply a case of misunderstanding and misapplying FAITH! They did not understand it, or God's promises, so their ignorance slew their child! These things have happened -- time and time again! O, the woe and suffering caused by false teaching, false doctrines, and false, misplaced, misunderstood faith!

Because of such tragedies, people have questioned their faith, stewed in consternation, and felt so helpless and weak. And some have even denied God, and turned away from Him. They simply did not understand, either God's Word, or His promises. Sometimes their minister misled them.

Was their faith at fault? No. Was God at fault? Not at all. It was their *understanding* which was at fault!

I have known of cases where believing men even tried to RESURRECT their deceased loved one, by praying fervently over the dead body -- to no avail. The pain of losing a loved one, whom they thought would be healed was so great so overpowering! But God did not heal the loved one, or resurrect him.

The fault was not in their faith. The fault was in their understanding of what God has really promised -- and what He has not promised!

Jesus Himself, who never sinned, gave us an example of how we should pray when we are beset by affliction, whether by sickness or other causes, when He faced the imminent prospect of His own death. Notice the *humility!* Notice the submission to the will of God! Did He "demand" that God fulfill His "promises"? Did He claim some promise for deliverance?

Not at all. Rather, He prayed more earnestly, "O my Father, *if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*" (Matt.26:39). He prayed, "O my Father, *if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it . . .*" (verse 42).

Do you see? In this sore trial, Jesus Himself did not know whether there was any way He could escape the prospect of His death, and still accomplish God's purpose. He prayed "*If*" -- but, in the end, He prayed that *God's will, not His own*, be done!

Here is our perfect EXAMPLE of faith -- and submission to God! This is the way we should pray -- even in our sorest trials, even if on our sickbed, even if nigh unto death!

## Chapter Four

# How Can We *Know* God's Will?

How can we know God's will, in a particular case or instance?

Some people have *said*, "You can KNOW God's will -- it most definitely IS His will to heal you when sick!" But they never back that statement or assertion up with positive Biblical proof!

I have already shown you, beyond any doubt or question, that you CANNOT always know in advance that it is God's will to heal a particular person, or illness. Even those who have claimed to know God's will have, at times, been simply shocked -- stunned -- devastated -- to learn, in a particular case or two, that they were WRONG! The people they believed, they confidently assumed, they "knew" would be healed, in actuality DIED!

Oh, of course they will be healed -- or made whole -- in the resurrection. All of us who believe the Word of God know that. But that is different from divine healing of an illness in this life! That has nothing to do with any supposed special unique "promise to heal" -- in this life!

The question remains, therefore, HOW can we know the will of God in any particular trial, test, illness, accident, or affliction?

To put it another way, how can we know just what we should ask for -- "in the name of Christ" -- and have total confidence we shall receive that which we request?

Jesus' statement that we could receive *anything* we requested that we asked in His name was NOT an invitation to anarchy -- or an invitation to greed, avarice or lust! It was not an open-ended, blanket promise covering ALL THINGS for all people!

First of all, this promise was only directed to His true followers -- those who kept His commandments (John 14:14-15). As the apostle John himself wrote, who recorded Jesus' words in John 14, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, BECAUSE WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, and DO those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Secondly, His true followers are only those who have received His Holy Spirit as a begettal -- as a down payment, the earnest of the Spirit (Eph.1:13-14). God gives His Spirit only to those who OBEY HIM! (Acts 5:32).

But what does the Spirit do? Just what is it?

### *The Power of God's Spirit*

The Spirit of God pervades the entire Universe -- He *fills* the entire Creation through His Spirit (Jeremiah 23: 23-25). David alluded to this fact when he said, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" (Psalm 139:7).

The Spirit of God is the creative and active energy of God -- His *power*. The angel Gabriel told Mary, the mother of Christ, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the POWER of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

But even more than that, the Spirit of God is also the very MIND of God! This is proven in I Corinthians, chapter 2. Notice verse 11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man" -- that is, the mind, where we do our thinking, which retains knowledge -- "which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Or, as the *Living Bible* puts it, "And no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit."

Thinking, knowledge, memory -- these are functions of what we humans call the MIND. Therefore, the spirit of God is also the Mind of God!

With this in mind, notice verse 12 -- "Now we (Christians) have received, not the spirit (mind) of the world, but the spirit (mind) which is of God; that we might KNOW the things that are freely given to us of God."

And verse 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit (Mind) of God: for they are *foolishness to him*: neither can he know them, because they are SPIRITUALLY discerned" -- that is, we can only know them by having GOD'S own SPIRIT MIND within us!

Paul concludes in verse 16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the MIND of Christ" -- the very mind of Christ within us, through the Holy Spirit!

It is only by having God's mind, His Spirit, within us, that we can *know* the mind or will of God! The more we have of His Spirit, or mind, the better we will understand, and grasp, and KNOW what is His divine will in any situation or affliction or circumstance.

Do you see? The Spirit tells us. As the *Living Bible* puts verse 16, "But, strange as it seems, we Christians actually do have within us a PORTION of the VERY THOUGHTS AND MIND OF CHRIST" (I Cor.2:16, *TLB*). How incredible!

Without this Spirit, we are cut off from God, and cannot know His mind or will. But by giving us His Spirit, God takes us into His own confidence. He makes known to us His will.

As Jesus said, "Howbeit when he (it), the Spirit of truth, is come, he (it) will *guide you into all truth*: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak:

and he will shew you *things to come*. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14).

Jesus added, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall TEACH YOU ALL THINGS, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Yes, the Spirit of God, the very MIND of God, is what will show us God's will in each situation -- it will TEACH us -- it will bring things to our mind from the very Word of God that applies to each and every situation. It will bring things to our memory. It will inspire us. It will guide us into ALL truth -- and even show us things to come in the future, as we need to know!

The best way to know and understand the will of God is to have the very MIND of God residing within you -- the very mind of Christ. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Let this MIND be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil.2:5).

Without the mind of Christ, we cannot know the things or thoughts or will of God. This is why Paul writes, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the WILL of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT" (Eph.5:17-18).

If we are *filled* with God's mind, then we will be wise, and *understand* the will of the Lord!

Almighty God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa.55:8-9). Humanly, it is impossible for us to know God's thoughts, or His will. But He imparts knowledge of His will and *His* thoughts to us through His Holy Spirit, or Mind!

God's Spirit is the key!

Paul wrote, on this matter, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the MIND of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints *according to the WILL of God*" (Romans 8:26-27).

God's Spirit knows God's will, and makes intercession for us according to that *divine will*. Even when we are lacking in conscious knowledge, God's Spirit knows all things -- and imparts to us that which we need to know under each and every circumstance.

But it is on a "need to know" basis. God does not fill our minds with the mysteries of the Universe, or the secrets of science, the calculations of higher mathematics, or the formulae of chemistry and physics -- we don't need to know those things at this time. But, in His wisdom He gives us what we need, when we need it!

This is what Paul meant when he said, "But my God shall supply ALL YOUR NEED according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:19).

God promises to supply all our *needs* -- not all of our human "wants," or physical "desires"!

The apostle James understood this. Because we are human, and still have human nature, which is warring against the Spirit, sometimes our human desires or wants are not in accord with the will of God, or the Spirit of God.

James wrote: "Ye ask, and receive not, *because ye ask amiss*, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (or, pleasures)" (James 4:3). He then says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (verse 4).

If we foolishly pray for things we shouldn't have, then of course God will not give them to us! He knows what we truly need, better than we know ourselves! He knows when we are asking amiss or not.

Similarly, this is why Paul wrote, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph.4:30). We grieve God's Spirit when we ask for the wrong things, to consume them upon our pleasures, when we lust, become vain, or go the wrong way, or falsely accuse or sit in judgment of others, or murmur and complain (Eph.4:31-32). We give God's Spirit pleasure and happiness when we love our brother, keep the commandments of God, humble ourselves, and do those things pleasing to Him!

Day by day, as we grow in God's Spirit, and obey Him, Christ is being "formed" in us (Gal.4:19). We become more and more like Him, and learn His will better and better. We learn to think and to evaluate things as He does. We begin to see things through His eyes, as it were. Old things become worthless to us; new spiritual insights become a treasure (Phil.3:7-8).

## Chapter Five

# The Purpose of Healing

Why, then, does God sometimes intervene miraculously, *and* HEAL? And why does He sometimes not?

Notice Paul's example. He wrote, "I will say this: because these experiences I had were so tremendous, God was afraid I might be puffed up by them; so I was given a physical condition which has been a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother me, and prick my pride. Three different times I begged God to make me well again.

"Each time He said, 'No, but I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people.' Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ's power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite happy about 'the thorn,' and about insults and hardships, persecutions and difficulties; for when I am weak, then I am strong -- the less I have, the more I depend on him" (II Cor.12:7-10).

We have already seen that sometimes the sickness, and the *lessons learned* from it, is **FAR MORE IMPORTANT** than any potential healing would be. Can you get that concept thoroughly implanted in your mind? AS in the apostle Paul's case, there was a very important spiritual REASON why healing did not come! It was far better for Paul to endure "it" -- the affliction -- and to remain humble, and to keep from feeling self exalted, than it was for him to be physically whole and healed!

The building of righteous, loving, humble, submissive *CHARACTER* is far more important than the relatively "minor" blessing of a physical healing would be!

But, when the lesson God intends IS learned, and there is no longer any reason for the illness, then God certainly will heal His children. At such a time He will honor their faith and trust and dependence upon Him!

But sometimes, of course, God does intervene and heal a person **MIRACULOUSLY!**

Why does He do that?

Jesus Himself performed such miraculous healings. They bore witness to Him, that He was the Saviour, a messenger sent from God. But even then, in-spite of *His many* miracles, *most people did not believe Him or believe on Him!*

Jesus then sent out His apostles, and said, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18). When they did go out preaching the gospel, after the ascension of Christ, Mark tells us, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with SIGNS following" (Mark 16:20).

The apostles were given "great power" (Acts 4:33). A man lame from birth was miraculously HEALED in front of a large multitude of people, in plain sight (Acts 3:1-11). God indeed confirmed the message by such great signs and wonders before the nation, "Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the SHADOW OF PETER passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were HEALED every one" (Acts 5:14-16).

Do you see? These were special miracles, which God sent to aid in the preaching of the gospel, the good news about Christ and His role as our Savior and coming King. These healings had nothing to do with the "forgiveness of sin" -- they were simply God-given acts of divine mercy, showing the power of God!

The purpose of healing, then, is in a very special way to reveal to people the POWER OF GOD! That is all. In a unique way, healing demonstrates the POWER OF GOD! Why? Because, very simply, nobody but GOD CAN HEAL!

Therefore, to a person with an open mind, these wonderful and miraculous HEALINGS were a divine PROOF that the apostles -- and Christ Himself, when He healed the multitudes -- were carrying out their preaching with the very POWER OF GOD BEHIND THEM!

Healing *testified*, witnessed, to that *fact*!

Sometimes this healing was according to an individual's faith (Matt.8:10; 9:27-29). At other times it was done in spite of a lack of faith, out of sheer mercy (Mark 9:17-29).

In the case of the man lame from birth, he had no idea that Peter was about to heal him when Peter first looked upon him. He thought Peter and John were going to give him some alms -- a small offering (Acts 3:5). Peter surprised him by announcing that he had no silver or gold, but he would give him what he did have -- he then *commanded* the man to get up and WALK! And then he reached down and pulled the man up; "and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up *stood*, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:6-8).

Healing shows the POWER and the MERCY of God! It is not a promise, but a divine GIFT -- *just as salvation itself is a divine GIFT!!!*

This was the key lesson Jesus was pointing out to those around Him, when several brought to Him a "man sick of the palsy. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the sick man, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt.9:2). But some Pharisees who stood by didn't like this. They accused Him of blaspheming God (verse 3).

Jesus then gave them a *comparison*. He asked them a question: Which would be easier? To forgive a man's sins, or to say to him, RISE UP AND WALK, and HEAL him physically?

Jesus did NOT say that this meant healing WAS necessarily the forgiveness of *sin*! Not at all! Rather, He simply SAID, *which is easier*, in your opinion?

They had no answer. They had no idea which was easier. In fact, if they thought about it, the truth was remarkably clear -- only God could do either one! Even as only GOD could forgive sin, even so ONLY GOD could HEAL this *person*!

So what did Jesus do?

Did He give them a lesson that healing IS the forgiveness of sin? Not at all!

Rather, He gave them a lesson that, by HEALING *this man*, He Himself was exercising the POWER OF GOD! Therefore, He *also* had the *power* or authority to forgive the man's sins!

Notice! Jesus said, "But that ye may KNOW" -- know what? -- "that the Son of man hath *power* on EARTH to *forgive sins* (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given SUCH POWER unto men" (Matt.9:1-8).

Those standing around Jesus, who saw the miracle, got the point. They saw that the lesson here was that Jesus had POWER GIVEN TO HIM FROM GOD -- something that the self-righteous Pharisees seemingly could not quite grasp -- or were not willing to grasp -- because they were jealous and knew that they had no such power!

This example, then, illustrates the whole purpose of divine healing. It is a physical demonstration of the POWER OF GOD!

Sometimes we need that demonstration in our own lives, and so God intervenes spectacularly for us, and HEALS us! But whether or not God heals us is a matter which He Himself determines, according to His own will. But if we are in need, and pour out our hearts to Him in prayer, then we can have confidence that He hears us, and will work everything out for the best (I John 3:22). In faith, we will ask according to God's will, insofar as we are able to determine His will. And God does honor faith -- although He also sometimes *tests* faith -- sometimes even unto death (Rev.2:10) .

So to repeat, healing and forgiveness of sins are two entirely different things. In the case of Jesus and the man sick of the palsy, Jesus forgave the man's sins BEFORE He healed the man. Therefore, the man's sins were already forgiven when Jesus turned and using the POWER of God, healed the man, and commanded him to take up his bed, and walk home!

Whether or not God will use His divine POWER to heal any of us, or our loved ones, depends upon many factors. Each situation may be different. Many extenuating circumstances

may be involved, many different attitudes. Therefore, each individual case in God's sight is UNIQUE and requires deft, wise and individual handling. No two cases are identical, even as no two snowflakes are supposed to be alike, or no two people's fingerprints are alike. Therefore, God judges each case individually, not by some all-encompassing "promise" He is supposed to have committed Himself to!

So what is the real meaning of this Scripture? Does it mean that we have some "promise" that whenever we get sick, we can be HEALED -- and *know* that we shall be healed?

No. God nowhere gives us any such specific promise. He has given us many promises, in His Word, and in a general sense these promises can be extended to INCLUDE healing -- but only with the understanding that this healing promise is in the ULTIMATE sense, including SALVATION! But as to whether God will heal any individual at any given time *in this* physical life, we have no such promise -- it is completely up to Him.

Hebrews 11 brings this truth out into the open, and makes it crystal clear. As Paul wrote, speaking of Abraham, and Sarah, and Enoch, and Noah, Isaac, and others, "These all *DIED IN FAITH*, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). Notice -- they had "faith," all right -- but they "died"!

Were these saints of God always HEALED, and DELIVERED from their troubles, because of their mighty FAITH? Obviously not! But they had faith like that of Job, who declared, in the midst of his sore trials: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" (Job 13:15).

Paul goes on, "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were *sawn asunder* [as Isaiah himself was, by the wicked king Manasseh], were tempted, were *slain* with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being *destitute, afflicted, tormented* [as by serious illness]; (Of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth [as some in the Church will during the Great Tribulation to come]."

Paul concluded, "And these all, having gained a GOOD REPORT THROUGH FAITH [they weren't lacking in any faith, even though they had these cruel trials and went through this affliction and tribulation -- they weren't just "faking it"] *received not the promises*; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be *made perfect*" (Heb.11:36-40).

Aha! Here it is again! Here the PURPOSE of sickness, disease, and all our other trials and tests is once again pinpointed and spotlighted for us -- it is in order to bring us to the state or condition which God describes as being "MADE PERFECT," whole, or entire, fully mature, spiritually!

Yes, we can and should rejoice in God's promises -- and in His divine mercy, love and compassion! And when we are sick, we can rejoice in our sickness, knowing it is helping to bring us to perfection, knowing that everything God gives us is for our good!

## Chapter Six

# GOD, Doctors and Drugs

Does God condemn doctors and drugs, and all medicine and hospitals?  
 Or does God sometimes work with doctors, drugs and medicines?  
 A strange question? Not at all! For some have DIED due to ignorance  
 and lack of wise understanding regarding the truth about doctors,  
 drugs and medicine as revealed in the inspired Word of God!

Does God Almighty condemn doctors and drugs, hospitals and medicine? Are all doctors really servants of Beelzebub, the god of this world, Satan the devil? Is modern medicine nothing more than "witchcraft" in the sight of God?

Many have been foolishly misled -- deceived -- and have suffered the consequences because of their IGNORANCE of the truth regarding this vital question! The truth, and true understanding should not be taken lightly -- it could literally SAVE YOUR LIFE, or that of a dear loved one!

Why is it that so many *assume* that doctors, medicine and drugs are automatically ANTI-God, hostile toward the way of God, and that this chapter should really be entitled "God Versus Doctors," or "Faith Versus Drugs"?

What abysmal, darkest ignorance!

What *is* the truth?

Sadly, millions today trust in a false faith. Thousands have been completely confused about the subject of faith and healing. Many *assume* that to take any drug or medicine is to show a complete lack of faith in God to heal! And since God says He is our Healer ("I am the Lord that healeth thee," Exodus 15:26), they refuse to have anything whatsoever to do with doctors, drugs, the medical profession, or hospitals -- so long as they have any choice in the matter.

And as a result, far too many innocent people, from the aged to children, have needlessly suffered the consequences of their lack of proper medical attention. Some went blind; some remained crippled; and some died!

In the eyes of some, going to a hospital with a sick child shows a serious lack of faith in God, so they stubbornly refuse to see a doctor even when a family member becomes seriously ill. To them, such an action as seeing a doctor is a complete lack of faith. Therefore they refuse

medical help. And *many have died, as a result!*

### ***The Very Words of Jesus Christ***

What greater authority can we have on the subject of healing, doctors and medicine, than the Great Healer Himself -- Jesus Christ?

Jesus healed more people during His lifetime on this earth than any other human being. He did so supernaturally, with the divine power of God. He had a special GIFT of healing, and performed countless miracles as a SIGN that He was truly the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God!

What, then, did Jesus Himself say that those who are sick and diseased should do? Did He say that they should do nothing? Did He say that they should merely have faith? Did He simply command them to come to Him for divine healing whenever they or a loved one became sick?

At one point in His career, when He was surrounded by crowds of people, Jesus answered this question. He declared to the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the time, and to the people:

**"They that be whole need not a *physician*, BUT THEY THAT ARE SICK" (Matt.9:12).**

What did Jesus mean?

Was He saying exactly what He seemed to be saying -- that is, that SICK PEOPLE NEED A DOCTOR? In other words, He told the masses that healthy people don't need a doctor, but it is sick people who need the services of a physician!

Those were His *plain words!*

Who said that? *Jesus Christ Himself!!!*

Does that sound like heresy to some? Those were the words of none other than Jesus Christ, the Saviour Himself! He simply acknowledged in this verse that sick people do need a physician. What could be more simple and direct than that?

Jesus repeated the SAME LESSON in the book of Mark. He declared: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17). Or, as the *Phillips Version* has it, "It is not the fit and flourishing who need the doctor, *but those who are ill.*"

James Moffatt translates this verse, "Those who are strong have no need of a doctor, but those who are ill."

Check any translation you wish. They are all very much the same. In other words, Jesus

plainly said to the people, and to His own disciples, that the *SICK NEED A DOCTOR!* And He was not referring to Himself. He was illustrating a sound principle.

Will we listen to Christ Himself?

***"GOOD . . . Like a Medicine"***

Some have claimed that a medicine is nothing more than a poison. They say that medicines, drugs, *cannot HEAL!* They say that God is a jealous God, and is jealous of His Divine prerogative as our Divine Healer! For some reason, such people seem to look upon medicines as a *false god!* The use of medicines, to them, is tantamount to **IDOLATRY!**

But where did they get that idea?

First of all, medicines are NOT poisons. But the truth is that anything, used to excess -- even common, ordinary *table salt* -- becomes a poison!

The dictionary defines a "medicine" as "any substance, such as a drug, used to treat, prevent, or cure disease or improve health." Even alcohol, or wine, or some other strong alcoholic beverage could be classified as a medicine!

Does the Word of God condemn the use of alcohol, or any other medicine? To the contrary, the apostle Paul **COMMANDS** the evangelist Timothy, to use this medicine. He says, "Drink no longer water, but use *a little wine* for thy stomach's sake and *thine often infirmities*" (I Tim.5:23).

Wise king Solomon recommended the use of strong drink as a special medicine for people who are suffering greatly, are very close to death, or very depressed. He wrote: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery (or pain) no more" (Proverbs 31:6-7).

Obviously God does NOT consider good medicines as any sort of idol or false god. He is NOT jealous of medicines at all -- in fact, He recommends their use! You see, it is *God* who designed the healing properties of certain plants, drugs, and substances -- the calming, relaxing, soothing, restorative, curative, and purgative properties of various substances of the plant, animal and mineral kingdoms. God intended that we discover them, and use them, with wisdom and discretion! God intended mankind to discover the healing properties of quinine, antibiotics, sulfa drugs, digitalis, and other modern medicines, as well as the nutritive values of vitamins and minerals in the human diet.

God's Word has further instruction about the use of a good medicine. Solomon wrote,

**"A merry heart doeth GOOD LIKE A MEDICINE . . ." (Prov.17:22).**

What? Read that again! Ponder it! This is inspired **SCRIPTURE!**

God actually inspired Solomon, in his great wisdom, to write down in Holy Scripture that *MEDICINE DOES GOOD!*

What could be clearer than that?

God's word nowhere condemns medicine. Rather, He condemns PAGANISM -- worship of any false gods, or pagan idols!

### *The REAL Sin of King Ahaziah*

Some believe that the sin of king Ahaziah, in the Old Testament, was the sin of going to a doctor, and taking an ancient medicine. Is that true? Or was his sin the act of willfully *consulting a pagan god* regarding his illness -- in other words, the sin of IDOLATRY?

Notice! We read that ancient King Ahaziah had an accident.

"[Ahaziah] fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, *enquire of Baalzebub* (the "lord of flies") the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord [Yahveh], Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die" (II Kings 1:2-4).

We read in verse 17, "So he *died* according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken." Ahaziah's sin, of idolatry, resulted in his death. But his sin was not taking some remedy, medicine, or ointment for his illness. It was that he scoffed at the true God, and ignored the God of Israel, and his priests, who were learned men in the field of medicine, health, sanitation, and public hygiene (remember, God is the author of the laws of public health and hygiene in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Ahaziah premeditatedly and deliberately consulted a neighboring pagan people's god, ignoring the God of Israel who is "Yahveh Ropheka," God Our Healer. This flagrant idolatry by the king was punishable by DEATH!

Does God condemn anywhere in Scripture the wise and careful use of medicines?

Not at all.

Rather, during the millennial reign of Christ, God says, "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow ALL TREES FOR MEAT [food], whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth NEW FRUIT according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the FRUIT thereof shall be for meat [food], *and the LEAF thereof for MEDICINE* [Hebrew, "for bruises and

sores"]" (see Ezek.47:12).

The Hebrew word Solomon used for "medicine" in Proverbs was *gehah* and simply means "a cure, medicine." The word Ezekiel used in chapter 47 was *teruwphah* meaning "a remedy, medicine."

There should be no question or doubt, then, that Almighty GOD approves the proper and judicious use of medicine for the purpose of healing, curing, restoring health, as a remedy for illness!

If anyone wishes to argue about this -- let him argue with *God!*

### ***The WISDOM of Solomon***

Solomon, the wisest man who lived before Christ, understood this fundamental truth which many have missed, in their desperate search for health and divine healing. He wrote 3,000 years ago about the GOOD that medicine and doctors can do! He sagely admonished us all, "A merry heart doeth GOOD like a medicine" (Prov.17:22). Notice! Here he plainly showed that a medicine can do GOOD.

To spurn the use of medicine, then, is nothing but religious fanaticism and heresy!

Are medicines and drugs, taken from plants, herbs, fungi, or other sources in the natural world, purified and refined, wrong for a Christian to take when sick? What about herbal remedies?

Are medicines evil, a thing of horror?

Not according to the teaching of the Holy Word of the living GOD!

As we have already read, but it bears repeating: *God Himself* answers this question when He inspired the prophet Ezekiel to write, concerning the future Kingdom of God and the period of time known as the Millennial reign of the Messiah: "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat (food), whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, *and the LEAF THEREOF FOR MEDICINE*" (Ezek.47:12).

Notice again -- "and the leaf thereof for" -- what? "MEDICINE"!

Notice! What purpose do the leaves of the tree serve? Moffatt describes it thus: "Their fruit shall serve for food, *their leaves for healing*" (Ezek.47:12).

The apostle John saw a similar vision of the future Kingdom of God. He declared, "In the midst of the street of it [the New Jerusalem], and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: *and the LEAVES*

*of the tree were for the HEALING of the nations" (Rev.22:2).*

God designed long ago that there should be HEALING PROPERTIES, medicinal qualities, in leaves, herbs, and various plants. He Himself designed the penicillin mold which grows on old bread. God is the Creator and Author of these things! He gave the lemon its healthful qualities; the lime; grapefruit; cayenne pepper; garlic; golden seal root; aloe vera; colloidal silver; ginger root; echinacea; oil of oregano; and many such herbs their medicinal, healthful, healing properties!

Should we accuse doctors of "witchcraft" when many of them are only building on the foundation of knowledge which God has revealed? Of course not!

Isn't it about time we face up to these facts? Isn't it time we admit that self-righteous, holier-than-thou attitudes, are not of God, but are based on incredible spiritual ignorance and erroneous thinking? Isn't it time many face up to the fact that such attitudes are sheer foolishness?

Remember, God only promises to do for us those things which we CANNOT do for ourselves. He does not turn on the light switch for us when we enter a room. He does not brush our teeth for us in the morning. He expects us to do all we can for ourselves.

Faith only involves those things which we CANNOT do of ourselves. We need God's help for those things we CANNOT do!

### ***Only GOD Can Heal, BUT --***

It has been said that only God can heal. In a sense, that is true, because God says He is our Healer (Exo.15:26). However, what many have completely overlooked is the question of *HOW* God heals. God can heal in *many different ways*. He can heal directly, supernaturally, instantaneously, miraculously -- as when Christ performed a great miracle (Mark 6:56).

Or He can heal slowly, gradually, letting a sick person mend over a period of time. A nobleman's son was healed by Christ even though He never went to touch or anoint the child. When the nobleman returned home, he found his son well. We read in the account: "Then inquired he of them the hour when he *began to amend*. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house" (John 4:52-53).

God can heal in many ways. Naaman the great Syrian general was offended because God's prophet told him to go and wash seven times in the Jordan river to be cleansed of his leprosy. Now I warrant you, if he had not obeyed this simple, trivial command, he would never have been healed! But he repented of his anger, and humbled himself, and "went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (II Kings 5:14).

God sometimes heals by using natural healing processes. Sometimes He works through

the ministrations of nurses and physicians. Sometimes he works through the application of medicine and healing salves and ointments (II Kings 20:7) -- including a poultice of dried figs. Sometimes He works directly with and even inspires the efforts of human physicians, such as "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col.4:14).

Now stop and think a moment. Luke could not have been called a "beloved" physician unless two things occurred:

1) he was much loved and appreciated for his labors; and

2) his primary labors and work involved being a physician -- a medical doctor! In fact, many commentaries show that Luke probably studied at the greatest medical school or university of his time -- at Alexandria, Egypt!

On the other hand, some physicians are utterly worthless, men of useless knowledge and no moral character whatsoever. They would be called "bad" physicians -- somehow they became licensed, but they have no real knowledge or expertise. It was such physicians Job was thinking about when he described and compared his three friends to "*physicians of no value*" (Job 13:4).

Jesus met a woman who had "*suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse*" (Mark 5:26). There are physicians who are worthless. Jesus healed this woman of her blood ailment (verses 27-34) because of her faith. But as we all know, there are many incompetent, money-gouging physicians in the world today, so the sick person should beware and keep on their guard!

The truth of the matter is, the vocation of physician is a very high, respectable, and worthy calling. It deserves the best that a person can give. It requires great time spent in study -- years and years of education at great expense. It is not a vocation we should deplore, sneeze at, ridicule, or thumb our noses at. It deserves the utmost respect and appreciation.

But -- and this is very important -- we should choose our physicians *very carefully!*

As in any human profession, there are many snakes in the grass, many no-accounts, many ne'er-do-wells, many frauds and charlatans in the medical business. Many quacks and imposters! So my advice is, when you are ill -- be careful! Don't just choose whatever physician avails himself -- don't just use the telephone book. You may not know what you are getting. But get reputable advice and sound counsel -- find out who is the best in any given area of expertise, and go to the *best!*

A close friend of mine's son had a condition that was completely misdiagnosed by a minister in the Worldwide Church of God, years ago. He thought the child had a demon and suggested that if the child did not obey the parents, he should be thrown out on the street! But the wise mother instead took the boy to a highly qualified, highly recommended physician who spotted right away that the boy lacked a particular chemical in his brain. The hospital began treating the boy right away -- he was very close to death -- and saved the boy's life.

The truth is, a nation with highly trained and capable physicians is a very blessed nation in God's sight. This fact is implied by the words of God made to Jeremiah the prophet. God says to His wayward people, "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold of me. Is there no balm [Hebrew *tsoriv*, meaning "to crack, as by pressure; hence to leak; distillation; balm -- an ancient pain-killing, soothing *medicine*"] in Gilead? *is there no physician there?* why then is not the *health* of the daughter of my people recovered?" (Jer8:19-22)..

How plain! Physicians *should* bring health, healing, recovery from illness! That is the role and function God intended them to perform! But sadly most have gone away from the laws of nutrition and health, and are in ignorance of the basic laws governing human health and vitality which God ordained!

But the point in Jeremiah is clear. Physicians ought to be teaching the people the laws of health and nutrition. They ought to be putting millions on the track to good health! But today we see a world gone astray. Although physicians can do much *good*, and the medical discoveries in modern times are indeed breathless and astonishing, nevertheless most physicians have really missed the boat, as many health oriented experts and doctors themselves confess!

Today's health crisis is frightening. The statistics are alarming. Doctors themselves are perplexed and astounded. Today we are seeing an avalanche of new, never before seen or understood maladies which have no cure -- such as AIDS, herpes, new forms of venereal disease, drug-related diseases, immune deficiency diseases, besides mounting hordes of cancer victims and other so-called degenerative diseases.

These curses are, as a whole, the result of BROKEN HEALTH LAWS! Be sure to read our article, "Amazing Ancient Bible Health Laws." Also, be sure to read our companion article, "Should Christians Eat Unclean Meats?"

But rather than change their way of life, and luxury, people as a whole are insensitive to the truth and unwilling to repent. Smokers continue to smoke even though their life expectancy is shortened by many *years*, and smoking is proven to bring on the onslaught of horrible suffering and painful diseases such as cancer, emphysema and heart disease. Other people have other bad habits which contribute to the scourge of sickness around us.

### *A Personal Example*

Can doctors do a lot of good?

Apparently some people distrust doctors so much that they are willing to gamble with the life of themselves, and their own children, rather than see a doctor under any circumstances.

For shame, shame, shame!!

I have already shown you plainly from the inspired and holy Word of God that physicians

can have great value and usefulness, and that their calling and vocation is a highly honorable and worthy one, one to be highly esteemed.

Let me give you a wonderful, personal example, if I may. Many years ago my lovely and beloved wife suffered a miscarriage early in the morning, and was bleeding heavily. The bleeding wouldn't stop. I rushed her immediately down to St. Luke's hospital, just about a mile from where we lived. It was 6:00 AM in the morning. We entered the emergency room, and they immediately began working on her.

But then a problem developed. I had no "medical insurance" as such at the time, so the question arose as to how I was going to pay the bill (estimated to be about \$1000 at the time). Although I had enough money in the bank, to write them a check for the amount, that was not good enough. Since the bank was not open, they could not verify my account balance

The matter hung in a crisis! I firmly argued with the hospital representatives and insisted that they admit my wife, who was in a life-threatening situation, rather than attempt to send her down to a community hospital thirty miles away in Los Angeles. The whole idea seemed absurd to me! I literally seethed in wrath and indignation on the inside, but kept control of my emotions on the outside. I politely but firmly insisted that they take her in. They then mentioned that perhaps they could, if the doctor who would have to do the operation would agree to it, so I insisted that they call him at home. They did -- and God blessed us. He was ready, willing and able to come down immediately.

While on the operating table, my wife's heart literally stopped beating. The doctor had to apply heavy, intense pressure on her chest, to get the heart beating again! The operation was a complete success, and Cappy was in the hospital only one day.

During this time, she lost quite a bit of blood and was very anemic, and it required about two months of bed rest for her to build up her blood and her strength. During this convalescence, many loving church brethren brought by dinners, helped with house work, and showed in many ways that they really cared.

In another example many years ago, my daughter Natalie developed a burst appendix, but we didn't know it for several days. We thought it was the flu, but when she didn't get better over the weekend, I took her to the doctor, who immediately said to take her to St. Luke's hospital for tests. They discovered the appendix had burst, and operated immediately. In this case, the infection had already spread, and she had to have a second operation to clear out the pockets of infection. She was in intensive care for a week, her life hanging in the balance. We came close to losing her, but she recovered, and is still with us, today.

If it had not been for the help of the doctors and their medical skill, she would have died! I thank God to this day for His mercy, answering my prayers in the affirmative, and granting Natalie her life, and for the skilled surgeon and hospital nursing staff.

But what is the point? Why do I tell you these very personal stories?

I do so to show you, from personal *experience*, that doctors and physicians, although they are human, and not perfect, nevertheless, are often *indispensable and invaluable!*

Don't be deceived! Don't be misled! Learn to appreciate EVERYBODY'S talent, gift, and training and experience!

### *The Role of Drugs and Medicine*

Many modern medicines and drugs come from plants. These include antibiotics, cardiotonics and certain analgesics. The antibiotic penicillin comes from a mold. Digitalis, used to stimulate the heart, is obtained from the leaves of the purple foxglove, a garden flower. The pain reliever morphine is taken from opium, which comes from the juice of the opium poppy.

Pharmaceutical companies produce other useful drugs from animals and minerals. Insulin is used by millions of diabetics and comes from the pancreas of cattle and hogs. The mineral iodine is used to make tincture of iodine, a liquid that helps prevent infection when applied to cuts and bruises.

Other drugs have also been created in the laboratory, including aspirin, sulfa drugs, and many sedatives and tranquilizers.

A clay tablet from the ancient Sumerian civilization in the Middle East, dating to about 2,000 years before Christ, lists about a dozen drug prescriptions. An Egyptian scroll from about 1550 B.C. lists over 800 prescriptions and refers to about 700 drugs. The ancient Chinese, Greeks and Romans also used many drugs. Although many of these ancient remedies were useless -- some were very effective. The Greeks and Romans, for example, used opium to relieve pain, and took squill, another plant drug, to strengthen a weak heartbeat. The Egyptians discovered the laxative effects of castor oil, and the Chinese ate liver to cure anemia.

The real drug revolution began about 1800 A.D. Since then scientists have discovered hundreds of drugs, the causes of many diseases, and have learned much about how the body functions. In the process, the practice of medicine has been revolutionized. Morphine was the first plant drug to be isolated from its plant host. Within a few years quinine and other plant drugs were also isolated, enabling researchers to learn more about the composition and effects of plant drugs, allowing them to prescribe them more precisely and with greater understanding and confidence.

Most of the major drugs used today have been discovered since 1900, including the hormones, antibiotics and sulfa drugs. The first barbiturate was introduced in 1903, and barbiturates have since become the most widely used sedatives.

Drugs today benefit mankind tremendously. On the other hand, they can be used improperly and cause great problems. They help cure and prevent many diseases, relieve body pain and tension and help the body to function properly. But their misuse can lead to addiction for millions of people, besides deleterious, unpleasant and noxious side effects.

Today man can cure, control or prevent hundreds of diseases through the use of drugs, medicines, and surgical operations. Partly as a result of medical progress, people today live longer in the United States than they did just 100 years ago! In 1900 the average life span was 50 years; today it is over 71 years.

Modern medicine is not mere witchcraft in a new guise, as its accusers would have you believe. It is based on knowledge gained through careful study and experimentation. It seeks to save lives and relieve suffering. Many thousands of men and women in the medical profession spend their lives caring for the sick.

Modern doctors have detailed knowledge of the human body and are specially trained in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. The United States has about 318,000 doctors today who provide medical care. Rigorous training and education is required before a person can become a medical doctor.

And as medicine has become more scientific, it has also become more complex. Doctors used to care for patients almost single-handedly. Many visited patients at their home. But today most doctors work as members of a medical team, in association with other doctors, nurses, laboratory workers and other skilled professionals. Because the field of medicine is so complex, many doctors have begun to specialize, and become expert in a very specialized, limited field of knowledge. This contributes to much better health care, on the whole.

One area which is gaining more and more attention is the prevention of illness. However, much still remains to be learned about the role of nutrition, vitamins, herbal remedies, and the prevention of illness. Unfortunately, many doctors are very ignorant in this area and are only knowledgeable in their own limited specialty.

All in all, the story of modern medicine reads like an amazing detective story. The discovery of many of the modern pain killers and therapeutic drugs is an intriguing, fascinating story.

One of the most valuable tools in the modern medical arsenal is drugs. Every year penicillin and other germ killing drugs save the lives of countless victims of meningitis, pneumonia and other infectious diseases. The use of these and other drugs has helped millions of people live longer, healthier lives.

The sulfa drugs, and antibiotics, our greatest germ-fighting drugs, did not come into use until the late 1930's and early 1940's. Before that time about 25 percent of all pneumonia victims in the United States died from the disease. These drugs quickly reduced the death rate to less than 5 percent!

Nevertheless, drugs are a two-edged sword. They can also *cause* sickness and death. Even helpful ones can cause harm if used improperly. *All* chemicals which affect living things can be called drugs. Some drugs can have dangerous side effects, especially if overused. Obviously they should only be used with care and expert guidance from a knowledgeable

physician.

### *Faith AND Works*

Although God is our Divine Healer, and His Word is *full* of conditional promises to heal us when we are sick, was this promise ever meant to REPLACE the wise and prudent ministrations of doctors and highly trained men of medicine, who have spent many years gathering their knowledge and learning their business?

Of course not!

Why is it that so many cannot see through the devil's ruse. He is the self righteous accuser of the brethren who says vehemently, "It is doctors OR God -- take your choice!" He is the one who claims, "You cannot believe in God *and* medicine!" "You cannot have faith in God if you put faith in doctors or their medicine!"

It is the devil who tempts people to disobey the Word of God and to refuse the plain words of Christ, who said that indeed the sick are the ones who NEED A PHYSICIAN! And when He said those words, He was not referring to the Divine Physician at all! The Jews knew very well what He meant. They knew He was referring to highly trained, skilled human beings, men educated in medical science!

It is the devil who is always trying to get people to think in terms of "either or." He is the one who sets up the straw questions, in order to confuse people. He says, for example, it is "Either Law or Grace," you must make a choice between the two. He fails to tell people that God's Way is based upon "Law AND Grace," or "Faith AND Obedience."

The devil wants to deceive you into thinking it is "Faith OR Works." But as the apostle James so clearly wrote, we must combine our faith WITH good works! He declared: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14).

Consider this question. Apply it to a situation where you are sick and in bed with a high fever. Can faith alone save you? Is it enough to merely BELIEVE and claim God's promises to HEAL you? Is it *sufficient* to merely ask for prayer and to be anointed?

The principle should be clear.

James said, "Notwithstanding, [if] ye give them not those things which are *needful* to the body; *what doth it profit?*"

In other words, if you don't "take your medicine," what good will your faith alone do? What does it profit, if you don't combine it with wisdom and good works?

James went on: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is DEAD, *being alone*" (Jas.2:16-17).

Here is a prime reason so many continue to be sick, and why others have *died* needlessly! They did not properly combine their faith with works! They stopped short of true righteousness!

They trusted in faith *alone* to save them!

But faith without works is *DEAD!*

***Mere Faith Is Not Enough!***

James continued, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works [here is that "Either Or" question again!]: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee MY FAITH *BY MY WORKS*" (James 2:18). James knew it was not a question of one versus the other, one *or* the other, but a question of faith PLUS works, faith AND works!

How clearly this applies to the question of medical science, drugs, medicines, doctors, and hospitals. The real question is not whether a Christian should consult doctors, or take medicine prescribed by a doctor, as opposed to simply having faith alone -- but whether if he does so, does he do so IN FAITH IN GOD?

Mere belief is not enough. Mere faith is not enough. God nowhere tells us you should have faith and then *do nothing!* Rather, He says you should have faith, and then do ALL YOU CAN, humanly, until there is nothing left for you to do!

It is tragic how much suffering is due to sheer ignorance of this well established Biblical principle!

James went on,

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils (demons) also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that *faith without works is dead?*

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"

"Seest thou how *faith wrought WITH his works* [he DID something! He took immediate and definitive ACTION!], and BY WORKS *was faith made perfect?*" (Jas.2:19-22).

James concluded, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so *faith without works is dead* also" (verse 26).

The "works" James is speaking of are the works of righteousness and obedience to the laws of God. They would include taking your "medicine" when you need it!

Among these laws of God are laws of health, nutrition, sanitation, cleanliness, exercise, proper rest, and the natural laws or properties of herbs and medicines which God has placed within various plants and other substances.

A wise man avails himself of all knowledge when he needs it. He does not dismiss helpful knowledge with cavalier contempt, nor does he repudiate the knowledge of medical doctors in a mistaken notion of what he thinks is "faith."

Wise king Solomon put it this way. He said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, *do it with thy might*; for there is no work, nor devise, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl.9:10).

In other words, when we become sick, *we should do all within our power to research and discover the CAUSE of our sickness -- and then we should TAKE ACTION to eliminate those causes, and RESTORE our health!*

*WORKS is involved!*

Mere "faith" alone is a deadly booby-trap, which leads to DEATH!

Solomon also wrote: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). People who ignore the knowledge and expertise of doctors, and try to "self-medicate" themselves, often don't know what they are doing and could do great damage to their health. Solomon also advised: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov.11:14).

Again, Solomon asserted: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Prov.12:15).

He also declared: "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Prov.14:15). Be sure to get plenty of advice, and a multitude of counsel, and don't make the mistake of assuming the first doctor, or adviser, you speak with is necessarily right. He could be dead wrong! Getting a multitude of counsel is especially wise in case of serious illness.

It is so sad that so many lack true wisdom. But the truth of God's Word plainly indicates that we must combine our faith in God, with *wise works*, if we desire to be HEALED!

### ***The Balanced, Right Approach***

Therefore, the true course of wisdom says, that once we have taken a sick child to be anointed, for the prayer of faith (James 5:14-16), and we have also taken him to the doctor for wise medical treatment and help, and even to the hospital if it is a life-threatening situation, and done ALL WE POSSIBLY CAN FOR HIM -- then, and only then, can we expect to have FULL and true FAITH in God to HEAL him or her!

God's Word is clear. We must first do our part -- all we possibly can. And once we have

done that, then we can expect and look for God's healing through His own healing power!

It is so sad that so many only have half of the above equation. They either believe in God -- alone -- without the accompanying "works" which God demands; or else they only believe in doctors, and leave God totally out of the picture!

Both viewpoints are extremes.

The true Christian approach, sanctioned by the Word of God and expressly taught by Jesus Christ Himself, is to do all we possibly can, physically, to find a remedy for our illness or disease; but also, in combination with that, to put our entire heart's trust in GOD as the only true Healer and Sustainer, to heal us when we are sick!

You see, it is not a question of which will you trust -- God OR drugs? God OR doctors? It is a question of will you avail yourself of the discoveries of modern medical science, doing all you can for yourself, and then *also* call on God and in faith ask Him to heal you, providing that which neither you nor the doctors can do!

God is not limited! He can work *with* doctors who prayerfully call upon him, as Luke must have done. He can work with or through drugs, herbs or medicines. Or He can work in spite of them!

You do your part. And then leave the rest to God, to do His own way, however He chooses! *But don't neglect to do your own part with diligence and urgency, as the situation requires!*

Thank God for the blessing of this priceless and wonderful knowledge!

Many have died needlessly because of the lack of this right and precious knowledge!

Truly, as God says, His people are DESTROYED for lack of knowledge! We read in the book of Hosea the prophet:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I also will reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6).

Some have rejected this knowledge, and suffered the dire consequence. It is time for us all to repent of the mistakes of the past, and learn to trust God in WISE and LIVING FAITH -- faith combined with good works!

Frankly, my friends, seeing a doctor when you or a loved one is ill, is certainly classified as a "good work"!

## *Chapter Seven*

# **The *Power* of Faith and Prayer!**

Why have so many Christians lost their power, or never had any? Why do so few Christian ministers show any evidence of dynamic spiritual power? In an age preoccupied with physical power, nuclear power, and destructive power -- why is there so little SPIRITUAL POWER?

It has been said that in the hands of men, "Power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Sadly, this ancient axiom is all too true. Why is this so? The prophet Jeremiah gave us a clear insight into the answer: "The heart is deceitful above all things," he wrote, "and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer.17:9).

The apostle Paul also showed a prime reason why there is so little spiritual, godly POWER on earth today, *and so little divine healing*. He wrote, "Because the carnal mind is ENMITY AGAINST GOD: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom.8:7).

Mankind's wicked heart and carnal mind -- these two things separate us from contact with God, and therefore also separate mankind from the ability to USE the awesome power of God for healing, for miracles, for incredible answers to fervent prayer!

Yet, despite this fundamental reality, Jesus Christ prophesied, when instructing His disciples, "Verily, verily (or, most assuredly), I say unto you, He that BELIEVETH ON ME, the works that I do (including performing miracles, and great healings!) SHALL HE DO ALSO; and *GREATER WORKS THAN THESE* shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask *IN MY NAME*" -- *that is, BY HIS AUTHORITY* (there is awesome POWER in the name of Jesus Christ, when used rightly)-- *that will I DO*, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:12-13).

Jesus went on, "If ye shall ask ANYTHING in my name, I will DO IT!" (verse 14).

Yet, Jesus also asked His disciples, on another occasion, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, *shall He find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:8). What an indictment of our end-time, spiritually impotent, weak, God-ignoring, calloused, self-preoccupied and obsessed age!

*In the Days of the Early Church*

In the tumultuous days of the early Church, the power of God was evident in the lives of the apostles. "And by the hands of the apostles were many SIGNS AND WONDERS WROUGHT among the people . . . Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the SHADOW OF PETER passing by might overshadow some of them.

"There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: AND THEY WERE HEALED EVERY ONE" (Acts 5:12-16).

There was awesome spiritual healing POWER present in the early Church of God! But why has the Church lost that power? What happened to it after the days of the apostles? Why is it missing today?

There is a CAUSE for every EFFECT!

Of the early apostles, we read, "And with GREAT POWER gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and GREAT GRACE was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

But today the Church of God is powerless -- insipid, lacking in spiritual POWER! Why is this? What is the CAUSE?

One reason the Worldwide Church of God, the Church of God International, the United Church of God, Living Church of God, and many other end-time Churches, are lacking in the POWER of God -- and lacking in real dynamic HEALINGS -- is revealed in Revelation, chapter 3, where God describes the "end-time" Church of God, the Church which would exist just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, and which would include the VAST, OVERWHELMING MAJORITY of Christians in the "last days."

### *The Deplorable End-Time Church*

Notice what Jesus said:

"And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I KNOW THY WORKS, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then BECAUSE THOU ART LUKEWARM, and neither cold nor hot, I WILL SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH" (Rev.3:14-16).

Notice! How can a Church which is predominantly LUKEWARM expect to exert or manifest any spiritual POWER? How can a Church which is in dire danger of being EJECTED like vomit from the mouth of Christ possess any spiritual POWER WITH GOD?

That is a very good question!

How can a Church which rejects new truth, and compromises and waters down old truth,

and begins to consort and fornicate spiritually with the WORLD, by embracing the world's "solutions" to problems, including "life insurance" instead of FAITH IN GOD, and all the procedures of modern hospitals, surgeons, experimental drugs, and other practices of the pharmaceutical and medical professions -- without question -- know or experience the fantastic miraculous POWER of God for healing?

Rather, such a Church, and its membership, are in God's eyes, polluted and besmirched with sin, lawlessness, and perversion of truth and blighted with spiritual and physical disease.

Rather than drawing near to God in all humility and fear, and receiving of His all-powerful Holy Spirit, they are CONTAMINATED WITH SIN. Instead of being FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (Eph.5:18), they are GRIEVING the Spirit of God (Eph.4:30).

Rather than putting "on" Jesus Christ, as a garment, they are putting Him off, shoving Him away from their lives (Rom.13:14). Instead of the Spirit of God bubbling up in their hearts, like a fountain of fresh water, they are drying up spiritually, like a parched, seared, scorched desert. Rather than STIRRING UP the flame of God's Spirit (II Tim.1:6-7), they are in the process of QUENCHING the Spirit of God (I Thess.5:19).

Instead of burning brightly with the oil of God's Spirit, they are sputtering and flickering and in danger of their light going OUT (Matt.25:8).

Jesus says of such compromise artists, who are NOT filled with the ZEAL of the Lord of Hosts (Psa.69:9), like Jesus Christ Himself, "Because THOU SAYEST (they have a big mouth, and are proud spiritually), 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of NOTHING' (they are spiritually self-sufficient in their own eyes); and KNOWEST NOT that thou art WRETCHED, and MISERABLE, and POOR, and BLIND, and NAKED" (Rev.3:17).

***It's TIME to REPENT!***

For years, now, I have been crying out to the leaders, and members of the Worldwide Church of God, and other off-shoot Churches, to REPENT! To change their ways, to SHAPE UP, to flee from their sins, and to RETURN TO ALMIGHTY GOD, our Loving Heavenly Father -- but they have refused to listen.

They have instead cursed me, called me a false prophet, and cast me out of their fellowship! But since they are no longer fellowshipping with God, I don't miss their fellowship at all. But I long for them to repent, and change their ways, before it is too late.

Jesus says to them, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: BE ZEALOUS THEREFORE, and REPENT!" (Rev.3:19).

Will YOU turn to God with renewed ZEAL, literally "on fire" for God and His Truth, unwilling to compromise with it in even the slightest iota of a degree?

The prayers of thousands in the Church of God, today, do not have that spiritual power

and impact that they should. They have become weak, insipid, watered down, casual, lukewarm, self-righteous, and are not heard by God the Father. They are like the prayers of a certain "Pharisee" whom Jesus Christ described.

### *The SIN of Spiritual PRIDE*

As Jesus Himself said, the prayers of the Pharisees -- including even "modern Pharisees" -- that is, ministers in the END-time churches of God! -- for all their show and ostentation, are meaningless and irrelevant -- exercises in futility -- displays of pure self-righteousness.

Notice!

"And he spake this parable unto certain which TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES *that they were righteous, and despised others*" (Luke 18:9). This is the common attitude of many a Pharisaical minister, or Church member!

"Two men went up unto the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus [notice! He didn't even get down on his knees; obviously he didn't spend very much time humbling himself before the Throne of God] WITH HIMSELF, 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.'

This Pharisee wasn't really speaking to God, but to himself! This so-called prayer was a "monologue" -- a one-way conversation between he and himself, even though he may have proudly assumed, in his own mind, that God would surely be listening to such a devout, holy one as he considered himself to be!

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'"

This man beat his breast, confessing he was an unworthy sinner. He had a humble attitude, truly self-effacing, not presumptuous at all. Notice what Jesus said:

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be ABASED; and he that HUMBLETH himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

Could this be why so many prayers of so many of "God's people" today are not answered?

The end-time Laodicean Church is a proud Church, one which is exalted in its own eyes. It will not willingly take correction. It has the attitude of the self-righteous Pharisee!

It thinks it is rich, but is spiritually on its "death bed."

If you have not read it, be sure to write for my articles, "Where Is the Laodicean

Church?" and "Which Work Is God's True Work?"

The primary characteristic of the end-time "Laodicean" churches, besides thinking they are "rich," and having a large "income," financially, is their obvious lukewarmness. Rather than having faith in God, despite small numbers or income, they rely on and stress large memberships, boast of their offerings and monetary income, and focus their eyes on the PHYSICAL!

However, a person IN that condition cannot tell he is lukewarm. Because it is a slow process, his body temperature "adjusts" and he never realizes that he is in danger of dying, spiritually. He feels comfortable. But he is spiritually "numb" -- like the deadened feeling of a person suffering from frostbite in a raging blizzard. He is in danger of losing his feet, his fingers, his ears, and every exposed surface part of his body, and will soon drift into an eternal sleep -- unless somebody wakes him out of his powerful lethargy!

He is like the "FROG" that is placed in a pot of water, with the temperature slowly being turned up. He feels comfortable at first, warm, and lazy. As the temperature rises, he becomes even more sluggish and weakened. Finally, when the water begins to boil, he is helpless and unable to escape -- and dies!

What does Jesus Christ say, first, to these end-time Christians who have lost their first love, their earnest zeal, and much spiritual truth?

He tells them to BE ZEALOUS, and to REPENT! These two prerequisites are the key elements that we all need in order to recapture the POWER of God's Holy Spirit which was poured out upon the New Testament Church of God, and the apostles of olden times!

To have our prayers answered, WITH POWER, with dynamic and direct intervention of Almighty God, we must rekindle the Spirit of God and become renewed in WHITE-HOT SIZZLING ZEAL AND SPIRITUAL ENERGY of God!

As Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou STIR UP the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but [the Spirit of] POWER, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim.1:6-7).

### ***The Fervent, Powerful Prayers of Elijah***

Notice! The apostle James wrote, "The effectual FERVENT prayer of a righteous man availeth MUCH" (Jas.5:16). It has a "POWERFUL EFFECT," according to the *Good News Bible*. The *Living Bible* says, "The EARNEST prayer of a righteous man has GREAT POWER AND WONDERFUL RESULTS."

The Phillips Translation says, "TREMENDOUS POWER IS MADE AVAILABLE through a good man's earnest prayer."

James Moffatt translated, "The prayers of the righteous have a POWERFUL EFFECT." Says the *Amplified Bible*, "The earnest (heart-felt, continued) prayer of a righteous man MAKES TREMENDOUS POWER AVAILABLE -- DYNAMIC IN ITS WORKING."

James goes on to cite the example of the prophet Elijah -- a praying man, who spent much time *communing* with God in prayer. James wrote, "*Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are* [he was human, just as we are, and he had weaknesses just as we do], and HE PRAYED EARNESTLY that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (Jas.5:17-18).

How much zeal do you have in your prayers? Do you raise your arms and hands toward heaven, sometimes, and your arms tremble and shake with the intensity and exertion of your emotion and prayer?

Jesus Christ was filled with the ZEAL of God, and His Spirit. This is one reason He could do the amazing miracles which documented His Messiahship! Prophesying of Christ, David wrote, "FOR THE ZEAL OF THINE HOUSE HATH EATEN ME UP [CONSUMED ME]; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me" (Psalm 69:9).

Yes, if you begin to manifest ZEAL for God, as Jesus did, then men and ministers will begin to reproach you, too. They cannot stand a white-hot, fervent servant of God.

"Take it easy," they will tell you; "Calm down. Go with the flow." "Don't get all upset because the Church won't admit error when you show it to them. Just forget it."

"Leave it to God. Let Him correct them. It's none of your business."

They will say things like, "Don't be so emotional -- lest you look like a Pentecostal 'holy roller'!"

"You should be more staid, laid-back, bland, in your approach, lest you offend people."

"Don't dance before the Lord, don't parade around on the Feast of Tabernacles, waving the 'lulav' -- that smacks of emotionalism."

And so they refuse correction, and refuse to change their behavior. They remain in a spiritual rut, feeling superior to others, like the Pharisee, and condemn those who with sincere emotion are serving Almighty God! Like the Pharisee, they cannot see the forest for the trees.

Jesus Christ said of such, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt.15:14). Truly, as Jesus said, they are BLIND spiritually!

### ***Serve God with Flaming ZEAL***

One reason there is such a lack of powerfully answered prayers, today, is the tremendous

lack of real spiritual ZEAL! That is why God commands us, through the apostle Paul, "That is why I would remind you to STIR UP -- REKINDLE THE EMBERS, FAN THE FLAME AND KEEP BURNING -- the (gracious) gift of God, (the inner fire) that is in you" (II Tim.1:6, *The Amplified Bible*).

Also, notice the example of fervent zeal of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. When Phinehas saw an Israelite leader take a Moabitish woman into his tent, a woman who worshipped Baal-peor, thus sinning against the Lord, he went into the tent after them and thrust them both through with the sword. When he did that, God stopped the plague which had been smiting Israel (Numbers 25:6-9).

When Phinehas did this, God spoke to Moses, saying, "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was ZEALOUS FOR MY SAKE among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him *my covenant of peace*; and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; BECAUSE HE WAS ZEALOUS FOR HIS GOD, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (verses 11-13).

In the original Hebrew, the phrase in verse 11 literally says that Phinehas was "*ZEALOUS WITH MY ZEAL*." That is, he had the very zeal of God!

If we desire to be pleasing in God's sight, and to serve Him, and to have our prayers answered mightily, and POWERFULLY, then we, too, must put on -- as a cloak or garment -- the very ZEAL OF ALMIGHTY GOD! We need to BURN with white-hot fervor for God and sizzle with fervor for His divine Truth!

Are you zealously *burning up* for the TRUTH of God?

### *The Prayers of the Truly Righteous*

Remember, to have our prayers answered, with powerful divine intervention, and amazing results, we must also be *righteous* in God's sight -- that is, we must be walking in His commandments and laws. God says of the disobedient, who forsake His laws, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, *even his prayer shall be ABOMINATION*" (Proverbs 28:9).

The apostle John also tells us in plain words: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, and *do* those things that are *pleasing* in His sight" (I John 3:22).

Remember, why were Elijah's prayers answered? James hit the nail on the head when he wrote: "The effectual fervent prayer of a RIGHTEOUS man availeth much" (Jas.5:16).

One cannot expect his prayers to be answered if he is living a life of sin and disobedience, pride and arrogance, vanity and self-importance. God is far off to the haughty and proud. James further writes: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (Jas.4:6).

Peter also wrote: "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you" (I Pet.5:5-7).

Humility, obedience, and zeal -- what an unbeatable combination!

We must also be filled with divine ZEAL. But even our zeal -- energizing, dynamic zeal -- is a product of the Spirit of God within us, electrifying and galvanizing us, and giving us POWER!

To have more of God's Spirit within us, more humility, to be more obedient to His laws, and to have more spiritual power -- we must spend much more time with Him in daily prayer, and Bible study. We must WALK with God, as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the prophets of old did! (Gen.5:22; 6:8-9; 17:1). Write for our free articles, "How To Walk with God," and "The Awesome Power of Prayer!"

Jesus Himself sometimes spent all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12). He often "rose up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). His prayers were fervent, and full of energy and zeal, at one time so earnest that "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

How earnest are your prayers?

### ***Why Men and Women Lack Faith***

Another primary reason people-- even in the end-time Church of God -- lack spiritual power today is their lack of real, believing faith. When trials come, and the going gets tough, they become nervous nellys, and fearful, anxious, and afraid. The reason they lack real, solid, substantial, rock-hard and unwavering faith in God is simple: Despite appearances, they are not close to God. They don't spend nearly enough time with Him in prayer and Bible study, even praying over the Scriptures while on their knees before God's Throne.

Years ago, in the late 1950's, Lesson Four of the Ambassador Bible Correspondence Course taught students how to study and understand the Bible. It was excellent. But the key thing I remember from the lesson was the instruction and exhortation that to really understand God's Word, we should spend ONE HOUR EACH DAY in prayer, one hour a day in Bible study, and one hour a day in meditation upon the Word of God.

That concept struck me mightily as a teenager and I began to strive to do it. I found it relatively easy during those high school years to spend an hour a day studying the Bible; sometimes I spent the entire Sabbath reading the Bible, and one Sabbath I read the entire book of Psalms (150 chapters), Proverbs (31), Ecclesiastes (12), and Song of Solomon (8).

But, although from time to time I did pray an hour or more at a time, I found this habit

difficult to develop. And when I went to Ambassador College, and became very busy with classes, it was very difficult to maintain real "time" with God in prayer. I would still do it on occasion, but not daily. I strove to pray at least 30 minutes a day, usually in the morning, and sometimes in the afternoon. Sometimes I managed to pray 20 minutes in the morning, 20 minutes at or around noon, and 20 minutes in the evening. But the atmosphere at Ambassador did not really lend itself to praying an hour a day.

Sometimes I managed to spend an hour a day, cumulatively -- but even that was difficult. Sometimes I longed for the days when, living up in northern Seattle, I could go into the woods, next to our home, find a spot under a tree on a hillside, and pray, sing psalms, and commune with God.

Jesus sometimes prayed all night to God.

At other times, just a short prayer sufficed, proving that He was close to God the Father all the time. When Jesus' friend Lazarus was dead and buried in the tomb, Jesus lifted up His eyes and prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41-42).

And, after having said this short prayer, lasting only about ten-seconds, Jesus cried aloud, "LAZARUS, COME FORTH!" (verse 43) -- and His dead friend arose from his grave, stood up, and walked out of his tomb, bound hand and foot with grave clothes!

### *The Problem of Disobedience*

But why, then, do people today -- including the vast, overwhelming majority of ministers, including those in the end-time churches of God -- lack this kind of prayer power, this kind of contact with GOD?

We have already discussed the problem of disobedience. Many are disobeying God's commands, and don't even know it. But their disobedience cuts them off from God, as Isaiah wrote:

"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;  
neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: *But your iniquities  
have separated between you and your God, and your SINS have  
HID HIS FACE from you*" (Isa.59:1-2).

God declares,

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his PRAYER  
shall be ABOMINATION" (Prov.28:9).

Those who forsake the laws of God, and turn away from faith in God, and pervert the truth of God, even their prayers are utter abomination and filth in the sight of God.

Truly, as Jeremiah foretold: "A wonderful and horrible thing [astonishment and filthiness, margin] is committed in the land; the *prophets prophesy falsely*, and the priests bare rule by their means; and my people *love to have it so*: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer.5:30-31).

One cannot truly have faith that God will answer prayers if he is living in disobedience to the laws of God! The apostle John wrote plainly: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *BECAUSE WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS*, and do those things that are *pleasing* in his sight" (I John 3:22).

I used to wonder why there was not more spiritual POWER in the Worldwide Church of God. Then, in the 1960's, I began to discern that many things were not being done according to the Word of God, and that human "politicking" was commonly practiced as a way to "get ahead" and to be "ordained" to the ministry. God's Word was already being shoved aside.

In the 1970's I perceived the situation had gotten much worse -- indeed, something very serious was "rotten in Denmark," as the expression goes. Enormous sins of high level adultery were covered up; President Nixon's "Watergate" scandal seemed small potatoes by comparison with the spiritual cover-up perpetrated by Herbert Armstrong concerning the sins of his son Garner Ted Armstrong. I began to see first-hand the egotism and self-importance and imperious self-will that existed in the highest places in the Church.

I had often wondered why, when Richard David Armstrong died in 1958, due to massive injuries sustained in a violent automobile accident, and Herbert Armstrong prayed fervently that God would raise him from the dead, why his prayer was not answered. But when I learned of the many sins which had been covered up and hidden, during the 1950's and 1960's, I no longer wondered why many prayers were not answered. The answer seemed all too obvious.

Sin separates from God! God cannot use somebody who is filled with sin and wickedness, who PRACTICES SIN, in his life! As the apostle John wrote, "Whosoever is born (or, begotten) of God doth not commit (practice) sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he CANNOT (PRACTICE) sin, because he is born (begotten) of God" (I John 3:9).

Those who commit sin, transgress the law of God, for sin IS, by definition, the transgression of God's law (I John 3:4). But if we abide in Christ, then we do not practice SIN (verse 6). Those who say they abide in Christ, that is, are Christians (even ministers!), but who practice SIN, have not really seen Christ, neither known Him (I John 3:6).

In fact, John said, one who says he knows God -- including any minister! -- who "keepeth not his commandments, IS A LIAR, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

If we desire to pray with power, and to have our prayers answered, then regardless of our station in life, we must ROOT OUT SIN, uproot it, and cast it out of our lives! Isaiah wrote, again, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; BE YE CLEAN, THAT BEAR THE VESSELS OF THE LORD" (Isa.52: 11).

Unless one is "clean," spiritually, and not hiding sin in his life; unless one is truly striving to obey God, and not compromising with sin; unless one is keeping God's commandments, and NOT LIVING IN ADULTERY -- his prayers are useless, futile, and vain -- an outright unclean thing in themselves -- an *abomination!*

But even if we obey God, and if we pray fervently, and perseveringly, continuously, that is still not enough to have power with God, and to have prayers answered. Even if we wrestle with God, tenaciously, in prayer, as Jacob wrestled with the One who became Christ all night (Gen.32:22-32), there is still one thing needed before God will hear us.

### *Faith to Move Mountains*

The apostle Paul put it this way: "But without FAITH it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must BELIEVE that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb.11:6).

Can you say, in your heart of hearts, when you pray to God, "I BELIEVE!" "I REALLY BELIEVE!" "YES, FATHER, I B-E-L-I-E-V-E!!!"

When a man brought his son to the disciples for healing, they could not cast the demon out. Then the man implored Jesus Himself, "IF thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us" (Mark 9:22).

Jesus rebuked the man's lack of faith, answering, "(You say to Me), If You can do anything? (Why,) all things can be -- are possible -- to him who believes!" (verse 23, Amplified Bible). Moffatt translates this, "Jesus said to him, 'If you can! Anything can be done for one who believes.'"

The Phillips translation has it, "*If you can do anything!*" retorted Jesus. *'Everything is possible to the man who believes.'*"

Let's continue with the Phillips version.

"*I do believe,*" the boy's father burst out. *'Help me to believe MORE!'*"

Jesus then proceeded to heal the boy.

"The spirit gave a loud scream and after a dreadful convulsion left him. The boy lay there like a corpse, so that most of the bystanders said, 'He is dead.'

"But Jesus grasped his hands and lifted him up, and then he stood on his own feet" (Mark 9:22-27).

In another place, Jesus asked two blind men, who cried out to Him to have mercy on them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" When they answered, "Yea, Lord," He responded by touching their eyes, and said,

**"According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt.9:29).**

And their eyes were opened!

When a centurion came to Jesus to heal his servant, Jesus replied, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion said that wasn't necessary, and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matt.8:5-9).

Jesus replied, speaking to all the audience which had gathered, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (v.10). He then told the soldier, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (v.13). The man's servant was healed that very hour.

How *much faith* does it take?

The fact is, it does not require very much. Great miracles can be accomplished with just a "smidgen" of faith -- just an "*ounce*" of faith will go a long way. In fact the power of faith is far greater than Einstein's famous formula where  $E = mc^2$ . There is far more POWER in an ounce of "faith" than in an atomic bomb or hydrogen bomb!

Jesus later said to His disciples, who asked Him why they could not cast out the demon from the man's son, "Because of your UNBELIEF: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed (a very tiny seed, almost microscopic), ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO YOU" (Matt.17:20).

Faith to move mountains! How much faith is required to do that? Jesus answered, just faith the size of a *tiny seed of mustard!* I have planted mustard seeds, when planting a vegetable garden. They are really among the smallest of seeds.

Yet faith the size of a tiny, little mustard seed -- almost *microscopic* in size -- is enough to *MOVE MOUNTAINS!*

That isn't very much, is it?

In another place, where Jesus cursed a barren, unfruitful fig tree, and a day later the disciples saw it all withered up from the roots, they marveled. Jesus told them, "Verily I say unto you, *If ye have faith, and doubt not*, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, **BELIEVING**, YE SHALL RECEIVE" (Matt.21:21-22).

If you lack this kind of faith, sheer belief, then go and ask God for it! Beg, implore, beseech Him for it -- and importune Him, incessantly, unreservedly, unashamedly, unabashedly,

wholeheartedly! He will not then deny you, even as a loving Father will not deny His dear son that which he needs!

Mark records this incident also, and quotes the words of Jesus as follows: "*Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, BUT SHALL BELIEVE that those things which he saith shall come to pass; HE SHALL HAVE WHATSOEVER HE SAITH.*"

"Therefore I say unto you, *What things soever Ye desire, when ye pray, BELIEVE THAT YE RECEIVE THEM, and ye shall have them!*" (Mark 11:22-24).

In another example of the power of a little faith, the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, "Lord, *Increase our faith*" (Luke 17:5). They, like many of us, desired *more faith* than they had.

Many times, remember, Jesus had rebuked them for their "little faith" (Matt.6:30; 14:31).

Jesus replied to them, "If ye had *faith as a grain of mustard seed*, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:6).

When Peter had tried to walk on the water, imitating Christ, and began to sink, Jesus grabbed him by the hand to rescue him, saying, "O thou of *little faith*, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt.14:31).

Often we begin to doubt because, like Peter, we are too close to the problem and too far away from God.

Unless we are walking with God, and talking with God often, and studying His Word deeply and prayerfully, unless we are filled with the Word of God, we honestly don't know how to exercise faith in a given situation, and often become desperate, like the man with the demon-possessed son.

So we pray the prayer of desperation -- crying out to God for mercy, and He hears us, because God is a merciful, compassionate God. He does not want us to suffer, or die, and does not try us beyond our means (I Cor.10:13).

I have heard of many prayers of "desperation" which were prayed in utter sincerity and were heart-felt, and even if faith were lacking, God remembers that we are weak and are made of dust, and he often overlooks our weakness and lack of faith, because of the urgency of the situation. He still rescues us, and heals us, and delivers us from death, even as He did Peter!

### ***The Power of Importuning -- Chuzpah***

The power of God in our lives is up to us. Are we willing to pay the price? Are we willing to seek God with all our hearts? Are we willing to WALK with God?

The size of our faith is up to us. We ourselves, by our actions, determine the amount of our faith, and the answers to our prayers. Unless we begin to *exercise faith*, by using it often, it will remain weak and impotent, and grow even weaker and more powerless.

But if we ask God for greater faith, and seek His will in our lives, and OBEY His commandments, statutes, and laws, then He will answer us -- and He will give us greater faith and more spiritual POWER in our lives, to resist the devil and overcome our sins and weaknesses, and grow in spiritual energy, faith, humility, and zeal -- more and more like Jesus Christ every day! (Gal.4:19; II Pet.3:18).

Jesus gave a parable to His disciples, saying: "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine, in his journey, is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

"I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet BECAUSE OF HIS *IMPORTUNITY* he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (Luke 11:5-8).

The Greek word for "importunity" here is *anaideia*, #335 in *Strong's Concordance*, and means: "impudence." Says *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*, this word denotes "shamelessness, importunity" -- the negative *a* followed by the word *aidos* meaning, "shame, modesty." In other words, the man has no shame, no modesty -- he begs for the bread regardless of the impropriety of the situation -- shamelessly, with what the Jewish people would call *sheer chuzpah* or brazen impudence! The word *chuzpah* literally means "shameless audacity, presumption, or gall"!

Thus we are commanded to "ask" of God the things we need!

Yeshua went on to add: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

You begin by *asking with "chuzpah" and bold shamelessness.*

*Are you ASKING GOD with sheer, unbridled effrontery, unrestrained boldness, impudent shamelessness, and huzpah? Are you asking God with sheer moxie -- that is, sheer energy, courage, bravery, and "nerve"? Another way to put it, is, are you asking with "heart" -- or even "gall"?*

The apostle Paul put it this way: "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted [tested] like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come **BOLDLY** unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:16).

You continue by *seeking*.

David wrote in the Psalms, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I SEEK after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle [*sukkah*] shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock" (Psalm 27:4-5).

Jesus Christ also told us: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" Matt.6:33).

Are you *diligently seeking God*, and His truth, and HIS WAYS, as if seeking for precious treasure, gold, or tremendously valuable precious gems -- like emeralds, rubies, or diamonds?

You follow up by "*knocking*" at the door!

Christ declared, in another parable, about the value of persistence. Luke records, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that *men ought ALWAYS TO PRAY, AND NOT TO FAINT.*" The whole purpose of this parable-lesson was to teach us the value of persisting in our prayers, and never giving up!

Yeshua the Messiah said: "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; *yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her CONTINUAL COMING she weary me.*

"And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which CRY DAY AND NIGHT unto him, though he bear long with them?*

"I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8).

Are you following through on your petitions and prayers by consistently and perseveringly *KNOCKING PERSISTENTLY on the door*? Are you being persistent?

Isaiah tells us: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which shall never hold their peace day nor night: Ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*" (Isaiah 62:6-7).

The apostle Paul declares, we should be "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and *watching thereunto with ALL PERSEVERANCE and supplication for all saints, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel*" (Ephesians 6:18-19).

The prophet Joel tells us, "Yet even now, the Eternal promises, turn to me with all your

heart, fasting, weeping, mourning; *come heart-broken*, not with garments torn, and turn to the Eternal One your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in love, and ready to relent" (Joel 2:12-13, Moffatt).

How about it?

Isn't it about time we stop blaming God, and blaming others, for our lack of healings and miracles in our lives? Isn't it about time we take personal responsibility for these things? Are you ready to begin this journey of faith and obedience?

## Chapter Eight

# Prayer Cloths and Special Miracles

We read in the book of Acts how the apostle Paul was used by Almighty God to do special miracles of healing the sick and casting out demons through sending special cloths to the sick and afflicted. Luke records: “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12).

Even more amazing, I suppose, we find in the book of Acts, “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people . . . Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the *shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them*” (Acts 5:12-15). Luke goes on describing them: “There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and *they were healed every one*” (Acts 5:16).

These miracles were similar to those performed by Christ Himself, who gave this power to His disciples. Matthew records that Jesus sent forth the disciples on a special mission, preaching the gospel, and told them, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt.10:5-8). Luke records in his gospel, “Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2).

Christ Himself set us the example. “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt.9:35). He gave this same authority and power to His *true, converted, servants, led by God’s Spirit*. His parting instructions to His disciples were: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: *Teaching them to observe ALL things I have commanded you:* and, lo, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*” (Matt.28:19-20).

Jesus is still with us, today. He has not departed and left us on our own. He now sits at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us as our High Priest (Heb.4:14-16). He set us an example, that His ministers should follow in His steps, and perform the works He set forth before us, that He Himself did (I Pet.2:21; I John 2:6).

Jesus said, in fact, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that

I do shall he do also; and *greater works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:12-15).

The apostle James declared: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual *fervent prayer* of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:14-16) -- or “has great power and impact.”

Jesus Christ declared to two blind men, who came to Him for healing, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” They responded: “Yea, Lord.” Then He touched their eyes, saying, “*According to your faith be it unto you.*” And their eyes were opened and they were healed of their blindness (Matt.9:28-30). Healing is a simple matter of faith -- and obedience to God. God will not heal one who knowingly and deliberately practices sin. If we come to Him obediently, keeping His commandments to the best of our knowledge, and then *exercise faith in His promises and His instructions, FAITH IN CHRIST*, then He promises to heal us, “according to our faith.”

Jesus declared unequivocally, “Have faith in God.” He went on, saying that if a person even asks a mountain to be cast into the sea (a mountain endangering us, or obstructing our pathway in serving God), “and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall *believe* that those things which he saith *shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.* Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*” (Mark 11:22-24).

This kind of faith itself is a gift of God (Eph.2:8-10), and a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22-23). “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom.1:17). As John wrote, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*” (I John 5:4). This is not just our human faith, but the faith of Christ dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit. As Paul declared, he sought to be found in Christ, “not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the *faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*” (Phil.3:9-10). As Paul wrote, “Christ in you [is] the hope of glory” (Col.1:27).

God’s Word is sure. His love is steadfast. As David wrote, “Bless the LORD [YHVH, pronounced “Yahveh”], O my soul: and all that is in me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities; who *healeth* all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:1-3). One of God’s great titles, or names, is *YAHVEH-ROPHEKA*, which means “God our Healer,” “The Lord Who Heals you” (see Exodus 15:26). Another of His Hebrew title-names is *YAHVEH-ROI*, meaning, “The Lord Who Sees” (Gen.16:13), and *YAHVEH-YIREH*, “The Lord Who Will Provide” (Gen.22:14).

Since so many people do not have a local minister, whom they can sincerely trust to do as

James says, and there are so many scattered people who need prayer for healing from time to time, we have prayed about it, and have determined to follow the example of the Scriptures, and the apostle Paul, by sending out “prayer cloths” to those who ask for prayer for healing. One may use the cloth as often as they wish, and as many times as they feel necessary, if they are not healed at once, immediately. But when one is healed, then they should no longer keep the cloth but throw it away or destroy it. It is only a piece of cloth, and must not become an item of idolatry or worship. It is *God* who heals, through the power of His Holy Spirit -- not the piece of cloth.

With these thoughts and examples in mind, we send out prayer cloths to those who request prayer for healing. These are simple pieces of cloth, or cut up handkerchiefs. They are not “anointed” with oil, as some have done in the past. Paul’s example was merely to send out pieces of cloth which he had touched. No oil was used, or any other ingredient.

When a person receives such a cloth from us, they should take it, place it on their body, near the spot where they are afflicted (if it is localized), otherwise on their head or near their heart, and go and pray, on their knees, if possible, asking God to heal them, in faith, according to His Word and the examples set in His Word, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Messiah and Saviour and Redeemer. If you are in need of prayer for healing, or some affliction, at any time, and would like to receive a prayer cloth, please let us know. We would be happy to pray for you and serve you in this way.