Healing and the Atonement

Faith, Medicine, Miracles, and False Promises

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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Healing and the Atonement
Faith, Medicine, Miracles, and False Promises

Written by Pastor Paul Tackett
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Introduction – Healing and the Atonement: Faith, Medicine, Miracles, and False Promises

There is hardly a subject in modern Christianity where more Scripture has been quoted, more suffering people have been misled, more religious money has been collected, and more foolishness has been passed off as faith than the subject of divine healing. On one side stands the fellow who has practically buried the supernatural power of God, as though the Almighty retired from the healing business when the last apostle died and has been sitting in Heaven with His hands folded ever since. On the other side stands the religious showman who claims that every sickness is a violation of the believer's rights, every disease can be removed by a sufficiently enthusiastic declaration, and every unanswered prayer reveals some deficiency in the person who remains afflicted. Between those two extremes stands the King James Bible, saying exactly what God intended it to say, without asking permission from either camp. The LORD who formed Adam from the dust of the ground has never encountered a medical condition beyond His ability to remedy. But the fact that God possesses unlimited power does not mean He has surrendered His sovereign authority to every preacher with a microphone and a collection plate. **God can heal anybody He chooses, but nobody has the authority to promise that He must heal everybody who asks.** That distinction will govern everything examined throughout this series.

The first thing that must be established is that divine healing is not a religious invention, an ancient superstition, or a doctrine that Bible believers should be embarrassed to acknowledge. The LORD declared in Exodus 15:26, "I am the LORD that healeth thee." He afflicted Miriam with leprosy and afterward restored her. He delivered Israelites bitten by fiery serpents when they looked upon the brazen serpent according to His commandment. He cleansed Naaman the Syrian through the instructions given by Elisha, extended Hezekiah's life by fifteen years, and restored Job after suffering that would have silenced most of his religious advisers. When the Lord Jesus Christ walked among Israel, blind eyes opened, deaf ears heard, lepers were cleansed, crippled men walked, devils departed, and the dead were raised. In Acts, the apostles performed extraordinary signs that confirmed the authority of their commission. These events actually happened. They were not symbolic illustrations invented to encourage positive thinking. God acted, bodies were restored, and witnesses observed the results. The Christian who denies that God possesses power over sickness has a serious problem with the Scriptures. But the Christian who takes every miracle recorded in those Scriptures and converts it into an unconditional promise for the present age has an equally serious problem with rightly dividing the Word of truth.

Consider the difference between what the Bible records and what religious men frequently claim. Jesus Christ healed a man who had been blind from birth, and the fellow could see. Peter commanded a man crippled from his mother's womb to rise in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and the man entered the temple walking and leaping and praising God. Paul healed a cripple at Lystra, and the result was so unmistakable that the people tried to worship the apostles. These were not carefully edited performances in which the audience was instructed to imagine a miracle had occurred. Nobody needed three motivational speeches and a special offering to convince the formerly lame man that his legs worked. He was already jumping around. Yet some modern healing operations produce considerably more noise than evidence, and when reasonable questions are raised concerning the supposed miracles, the questioner is accused of unbelief. That is a convenient arrangement for the performer. He receives the credit whenever somebody claims improvement, and the afflicted person receives the blame whenever the promised recovery fails to materialize. The Bible teaches faith in Almighty God. It does not teach faith in every religious personality who announces that Almighty God has authorized his performance.

The question of healing must begin with the historical setting of Scripture, because God did not address every promise to the same people under the same covenant. When the LORD told Israel that obedience would bring protection from diseases associated with Egypt, He was dealing with a particular nation under particular covenant conditions. When Jesus Christ healed the multitudes while preaching the gospel of the kingdom, His miracles furnished visible testimony concerning His identity as Israel's promised Messiah. When the apostles performed signs and wonders in Acts, those extraordinary works confirmed the message entrusted to men specifically chosen and commissioned by the risen Lord. None of those distinctions diminishes the truth of the miracles. They explain why the miracles occurred and prevent men from attaching promises to people God never addressed in that manner. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the Word of truth. A preacher who refuses to distinguish Israel from the Church, the law from grace, the gospel of the kingdom from the completed proclamation of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, or apostolic signs from the ordinary responsibilities of Christian ministry has no business boasting that he possesses a superior understanding of divine healing. A man cannot properly claim the promises of Scripture while refusing to recognize the divisions established by the Author.

At the center of this controversy stands Isaiah 53, and particularly the declaration, "with his stripes we are healed." Those words have been printed upon banners, repeated in healing services, proclaimed over hospital beds, and incorporated into doctrines promising immediate physical restoration to every believer. Yet Isaiah was describing the suffering

Servant who would bear the sins of guilty mankind. The very passage declares, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," and continues by explaining that the LORD laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Matthew 8:16–17 connects the prophecy with Christ's actual healing ministry, while First Peter 2:24–25 applies the language of His stripes to sins borne upon the tree and wandering sheep returned to their Shepherd. Romans 8:23 then identifies the believer's future hope as "the redemption of our body." Those passages belong together. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ secures complete redemption, including the final deliverance of the body from corruption. But the benefits of redemption must be understood according to God's appointed order. The saved man possesses eternal life now while awaiting the resurrection of a body still subject to disease and death. **Calvary purchased the final victory over corruption; it did not turn every Christian into an immortal man the moment he believed.**

There is perhaps no greater embarrassment to the doctrine of guaranteed immediate physical healing than the apostle Paul himself. Here was a man who performed the signs of an apostle, witnessed extraordinary miracles, preached with divine authority, and received revelations beyond ordinary human experience. Yet he pleaded with the Lord three times to remove a thorn in his flesh, and the Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul was not an inexperienced believer who needed instruction concerning the power of prayer. The man had been beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, and preserved through dangers that would have destroyed lesser men. He knew what it meant to believe God. Nevertheless, his affliction remained. Timothy suffered frequent infirmities and stomach trouble. Epaphroditus became sick nigh unto death. Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. These men were not spiritually abandoned because their bodies experienced weakness. Their conditions were recorded by the Holy Ghost, who evidently did not share the modern fear that acknowledging sickness constitutes a negative confession. A doctrine that cannot survive an honest reading of Paul's epistles deserves correction, not another promotional campaign.

The subject also demands a biblical understanding of faith, because faith has been confused with emotional excitement, mental determination, positive speech, and the refusal to acknowledge unpleasant facts. Romans 10:17 declares, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith rests upon what God has said, not upon what a man desperately wishes God had promised. A person may believe with complete confidence that the Lord possesses power to remove a disease without possessing a specific promise that the disease will disappear tomorrow morning. The father who approached Christ concerning his afflicted son cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself prayed in Gethsemane, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." These passages reveal that dependence upon God does not require

dishonest certainty concerning an outcome He has not disclosed. A Christian may acknowledge pain, receive a diagnosis, follow appropriate treatment, and continue trusting the Lord through every stage of an illness. The confidence of faith is not that God must obey our preferred timetable. It is that God remains faithful to His Word regardless of whether the answer arrives in the manner we desired.

Another matter that must be settled is the supposed conflict between prayer and medical treatment. There are religious teachers who regard visiting a physician as practically equivalent to announcing that God has lost His power. Yet the apostle Paul identified Luke as "the beloved physician" in Colossians 4:14. Jesus Christ declared, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." The Good Samaritan bound the wounds of an injured traveller, applying oil and wine and providing continued care. Isaiah instructed that a lump of figs be placed upon Hezekiah's boil. Paul recommended a practical remedy for Timothy's recurring stomach difficulties. Evidently, the men who insist that medicine is the enemy of faith have encountered a Bible containing several very inconvenient passages. The LORD may heal through extraordinary intervention, and He may also permit recovery through legitimate treatment. The use of a physician does not make God unnecessary, and dependence upon God does not make the physician automatically useless. A man who prays for his daily bread still has sense enough to eat when supper is placed before him. Christians should pray earnestly, seek competent care, and exercise responsible judgment without allowing either medical knowledge or religious personalities to occupy the place belonging to Almighty God.

The Scriptures also require that false teachers and counterfeit miracles be confronted without hesitation. Matthew 7 warns of false prophets appearing in sheep's clothing. Second Corinthians 11 exposes deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. Second Thessalonians 2 warns of satanic signs and lying wonders in the coming prophetic deception. Second Peter 2 describes religious men who, through covetousness and feigned words, make merchandise of people. Acts 8 records Simon the sorcerer attempting to purchase spiritual power with money and receiving a severe rebuke from Peter. These warnings were not placed in Scripture to provide decorative material for occasional sermons on discernment. They reveal that religious deception can operate behind respectable appearances, impressive claims, and apparently spiritual language. When somebody announces a miraculous recovery, the claim may be examined. When someone promises healing in exchange for a donation, the demand may be challenged. When a preacher instructs desperately ill people to abandon appropriate treatment, his advice deserves firm correction. The power of God does not require fraudulent evidence, and the truth of Scripture does not require protection from honest examination.

Yet this series must never become so occupied with exposing false healing ministries that it overlooks the people whose suffering has made those ministries attractive. There are believers who have watched a husband weaken through disease, parents who have spent nights beside a sick child, elderly saints whose bodies no longer permit them to accomplish ordinary tasks, and families who have prayed earnestly while receiving news they never wanted to hear. These people do not need somebody standing over them with a theological club, accusing them of insufficient faith because the illness remains. Nor do they need another person announcing that God no longer heals and that prayer for physical restoration is foolish. They need the truth. They need faithful preaching, earnest prayer, sound counsel, legitimate medical assistance, and the compassion commanded by Scripture. When Job suffered, his friends possessed an abundance of explanations and a remarkable shortage of understanding. They were prepared to diagnose his spiritual condition without possessing the information revealed in the opening chapters of the book. The LORD eventually rebuked them. There is a lesson there for every preacher tempted to explain another man's suffering with certainty God has not supplied.

The purpose of this study is therefore not to defend unbelief, promote fear of medicine, or provide another set of religious slogans concerning healing. It is to establish what the King James Bible actually teaches. God healed under the Old Testament covenants. Jesus Christ healed during His earthly ministry as Israel's promised Messiah. The apostles performed extraordinary signs confirming their foundational commission. The atonement secured the redemption of the believer, including the future transformation of the body. James instructed the sick concerning prayer, while Paul demonstrated that genuine faith may receive sufficient grace rather than immediate deliverance. Scripture acknowledges legitimate physical treatment and exposes false teachers who exploit the desperate. Each subject must be understood in its setting, supported by the words of Scripture, and applied without inventing promises that God never made. There is no need to weaken a single biblical miracle in order to reject a counterfeit. There is no need to deny divine healing in order to expose religious manipulation. And there is certainly no need to accuse every sick Christian of unbelief merely to rescue a doctrine that has failed the test of the Bible.

Above everything else, this series will bring the discussion back to the Lord Jesus Christ and the finished work of His redemption. The greatest problem facing mankind is not physical sickness, although sickness brings genuine suffering and deserves compassionate attention. The greatest problem is sin. A man may possess the strongest body in the county and still stand condemned before God. Another may be confined to a hospital bed, unable to walk, scarcely able to speak, and yet possess everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Salvation is

received by grace through faith, not purchased through religious contributions, earned through personal improvement, or demonstrated through uninterrupted physical health. A person does not become more securely saved when his disease disappears, nor does he lose his standing in Christ when his condition worsens. The salvation of the soul rests upon the blood of the Saviour. The redemption of the body rests upon His promised resurrection power. Both belong to the one glorious work of Jesus Christ, but their fulfillment must be understood according to the Word.

And that brings us to the final destination of everything we are about to examine. Every person whom Christ healed during His earthly ministry eventually faced mortality. Lazarus came out of his tomb, but he did not receive the final incorruptible body promised to the redeemed. Hezekiah received fifteen additional years, but those years eventually ended. The cripple at the Beautiful gate walked and leaped, but his earthly body remained subject to age and death. Every earthly healing is temporary because the present body has not yet been glorified. But First Corinthians 15 declares that the corruptible shall put on incorruption and the mortal shall put on immortality. Philippians 3:20–21 promises that the Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. Revelation 21 describes the eternal order in which there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. That is the destination toward which the redeemed are travelling. No disease will survive that transformation. No grave will retain a member of Christ's Body when He calls His people. No physician will be required to repair what the Almighty has made incorruptible. The greatest healing is still ahead.

So the question before us is not whether God is able to heal, whether the miracles of Scripture really occurred, or whether Christians should pray when sickness enters their homes. The answers to those questions are already settled by the Book. The real question is whether we will permit God to define His own promises, establish His own purposes, and determine the appointed timing of their fulfillment. Religious imagination has had enough opportunities to make a mess of this subject. It is time to open the Scriptures and allow the Holy Ghost to straighten it out. We will not replace faith with skepticism, but neither will we replace faith with presumption. We will not surrender divine healing to the counterfeit workers, but neither will we grant those workers authority the Bible never gave them. We will pray for the sick, acknowledge the legitimate place of medicine, defend the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, and proclaim the coming redemption of the body without embarrassment or compromise. **God heals, doctors treat, believers pray, and Jesus Christ will one day raise every redeemed body beyond the reach of disease and death forever.** That is not a promise invented by a religious salesman. That is the triumphant testimony of the Word of God.

1 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – I Am the LORD That Healeth Thee

Key Passage: Exodus 15:26 (KJV)

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.”

There is something mighty peculiar about a religious generation that can believe God created man from the dust of the ground but has difficulty believing He can repair the body He made. The same Almighty God who formed Adam, opened the Red Sea, brought water out of a rock, and raised the dead has never surrendered His authority over a single bone, nerve, organ, or drop of blood. Disease does not frighten Him. Death does not intimidate Him. No physician has ever discovered a condition that caused the Creator to scratch His head and wonder what to do next. The question is not whether God possesses the power to heal. He does. The question is whether every physical healing recorded in Scripture establishes an unconditional promise to every believer in every dispensation. Those are two entirely different questions, and a man can believe the first with all his heart while rejecting the second because the Bible does not teach it. The trouble begins when somebody takes a miracle performed under one set of circumstances, removes the circumstances, and advertises the miracle as a permanent entitlement.

Our text appears in Exodus 15, where Israel has just witnessed one of the greatest demonstrations of divine power in human history. The Egyptian army lies defeated, the waters of the Red Sea have returned to their place, and the people who stood trembling before Pharaoh are now singing about their deliverance. Yet scarcely has the song ended before the congregation begins murmuring over something to drink. There is a lesson in that sequence. A man can shout over yesterday's deliverance and complain about today's inconvenience before his throat has recovered from the shouting. At Marah, the waters were bitter, the people were thirsty, and the LORD used the occasion to reveal something about His character and His dealings with the nation. He declared Himself the God who heals, but He did not make the declaration in a doctrinal vacuum. The statement came with commands, conditions, and a particular national setting. Any preacher who removes those details may produce a stirring sermon, but he has not faithfully handled the passage.

The biblical record of healing is much richer than the modern arguments surrounding it. Miriam was struck with leprosy and restored. Men bitten by fiery serpents were preserved through an appointed means. Naaman washed in Jordan and came out clean. Hezekiah prayed from his sickbed and received fifteen additional years. Job endured dreadful bodily

suffering without having committed the secret wickedness his friends imagined. These accounts demonstrate both God's absolute power and man's complete dependence upon Him, but they also reveal that divine healing did not always follow the same pattern. Sometimes God acted immediately. Sometimes He required an act of obedience. Sometimes He used an ordinary substance. Sometimes He permitted suffering to continue. The Almighty never issued a rule requiring Himself to perform every miracle in the same manner. The Bible records what He did, explains why He did it when that information is given, and leaves men responsible to believe what is written. The safest place for faith is where God has actually spoken.

1. The Bitter Waters of Marah and the God Who Heals

Exodus 15:22 records that Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea into the wilderness of Shur, where they went three days without finding water. When they finally reached Marah, the water was too bitter to drink. The congregation murmured against Moses, asking, "What shall we drink?" Their problem was real, but their reaction exposed something that the Red Sea had not washed out of them. They had escaped Egypt physically, yet Egyptian habits of unbelief and murmuring were still traveling in their hearts. Moses did what their murmuring should have driven them to do: he cried unto the LORD. God showed him a tree, and when Moses cast it into the waters, they became sweet. Notice that the power did not originate in Moses, nor does the passage teach that every tree possessed medicinal properties capable of sweetening bitter water. God revealed the means, Moses obeyed the instruction, and the LORD accomplished the result. A miracle is not less divine because God chooses to employ something visible in its performance.

The remainder of Exodus 15:25 declares, "there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them." That statement prepares the reader for verse 26. God was dealing with Israel as a nation recently delivered from bondage, instructing and testing them as He led them toward Sinai. The promise concerned listening diligently, doing what was right in His sight, giving ear to His commandments, and keeping His statutes. Then came the assurance that He would not put upon them the diseases He had brought upon the Egyptians. Notice the exact wording. God did not merely say that diseases were unfortunate accidents beyond His control. He declared that He had brought diseases upon Egypt, and He promised to deal differently with obedient Israel. This is a national covenant setting, anticipating the fuller covenant instruction given through Moses. The words must be read as they stand. A preacher cannot remove four conditions from the beginning of the sentence and then announce that the remaining promise applies automatically to everybody listening.

Exodus 23:25 reinforces the same arrangement: "And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." Deuteronomy 7:12–15 likewise connects Israel's covenant obedience with divine blessings and protection from particular diseases. The audience, covenant obligations, national identity, and earthly blessings are not incidental decorations. They are part of the doctrine. Paul later instructs Christians in Romans 15:4 that the things written aforetime were written for our learning, and 1 Corinthians 10:11 says Israel's experiences were written for our admonition. Learning from a passage, however, does not require pretending that we are the original recipients of every promise. A Christian may learn dependence, obedience, gratitude, and confidence in God's power from Marah without placing himself under Israel's national covenant. Scripture is not a buffet where a man takes every blessing he likes and leaves the conditions on the serving table.

2. Sickness, Obedience, and the Covenant With Israel

The LORD's promise at Marah becomes clearer when the blessings and curses of the Mosaic covenant are examined together. Deuteronomy 28 describes physical blessings, agricultural prosperity, national security, and protection accompanying Israel's obedience, followed by judgments and calamities associated with covenant disobedience. Verses 59–61 specifically mention diseases, sicknesses, and plagues. This was not an arrangement invented by a modern healing ministry. It was a covenant established by the living God with a particular nation. The same law that promised blessings for obedience warned of severe consequences for rebellion. Israel's physical circumstances were frequently connected to its national covenant relationship with the LORD. When the nation turned to idols, rejected His commandments, or hardened its heart, God could send judgments affecting its land, crops, livestock, families, and bodies. The historical books repeatedly illustrate these dealings. But the existence of such judgments does not give a modern preacher permission to examine every sick Christian and announce that some concealed transgression must be responsible.

There is another distinction worth making. The God who brought judgments upon Israel was also the God who demonstrated mercy when His people humbled themselves. His authority extended to both the affliction and the restoration. In Numbers 11, judgment accompanied rebellion. In Numbers 12, Miriam suffered a direct physical consequence of her conduct. In other passages, the LORD withheld judgments or granted deliverance following intercession. None of this permits the conclusion that God is merely a heavenly physician waiting upon a sufficient quantity of human confidence. He is the Judge of all the earth, and His dealings are governed by His holiness, wisdom, mercy, and revealed purposes. Men have become so accustomed to describing God as though He were

employed by the congregation that they sometimes forget which party is sitting upon the throne. The LORD does not receive His authority from the sick man, the preacher, the prayer meeting, or the size of an offering. He is God before the prayer begins and remains God regardless of the answer.

The Christian living under grace must not be dragged backward beneath Israel's national covenant in order to obtain a physical blessing. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not by works, and the Pauline epistles distinguish the believer's standing in Christ from his present bodily condition. Romans 8:23 says Christians are still "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." That is important. A man may be justified, reconciled, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and eternally secure while possessing a body that grows tired, becomes sick, and eventually dies if the Lord does not first return. The presence of physical infirmity does not cancel spiritual salvation. Nor does physical health establish spiritual righteousness. Some wicked men enjoy strong bodies, and some faithful saints endure years of weakness. Under grace, God may heal, and Christians should pray for His help, but Israel's covenant provisions cannot simply be transferred to the Church by changing the address on the envelope.

3. Miriam's Leprosy: When the LORD Afflicted and Restored

Numbers 12 furnishes a remarkable example of sickness directly connected to rebellion. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, first concerning the Ethiopian woman he had married and then challenging his unique position as God's appointed servant. Their complaint revealed the deeper issue when they asked, "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" The LORD heard them. That short statement ought to trouble anyone who thinks private complaints become innocent merely because they are spoken outside the hearing of the person being criticized. God summoned the three to the tabernacle and personally defended His servant. Moses was not without faults, but the issue in Numbers 12 concerned God's authority and the disrespect shown toward the man He had appointed. When the cloud departed, Miriam was leprous, white as snow. The judgment was visible, unmistakable, and terrifying. The woman who had spoken against Moses now stood before him in desperate need of mercy.

Aaron immediately acknowledged the foolishness of their conduct and pleaded that the sin not be laid upon them. Moses did not seize the opportunity to congratulate himself, deliver a retaliatory sermon, or enjoy watching his sister suffer. Numbers 12:13 records his prayer: "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." There is genuine intercession. The very man Miriam had opposed became the man asking God to restore her. Yet the LORD did not simply erase every consequence in the instant Moses prayed. He ordered that Miriam be shut out from the camp for seven days before being received again. Verse 15 records that the

congregation did not journey until she was brought back. God heard the prayer, but He also maintained the period of public shame and correction He had appointed. Divine mercy and divine discipline were operating together. The passage does not permit us to reduce healing to a mechanical arrangement in which a prayer is spoken and every remaining consequence must immediately disappear.

This account proves that God can afflict a person because of particular conduct, but it does not prove that every afflicted person is guilty of similar conduct. That distinction is essential. Miriam's condition came with an explicit divine explanation. God revealed the cause. Without such revelation, men have no authority to invent one. A sick Christian should examine his life before the LORD, just as a healthy Christian should, but nobody has been appointed to conduct an imaginary investigation of another person's hidden sins merely because that person has cancer, arthritis, blindness, or some other physical trouble. There is a world of difference between a preacher opening Numbers 12 and explaining Miriam's judgment and a preacher standing beside a hospital bed pretending to possess information God has not given him. The former is biblical exposition. The latter is spiritual presumption dressed up in religious language. Miriam's restoration teaches us that God is holy, merciful, and able to heal, but it also reminds us that the LORD controls both the manner and the timing of His dealings.

4. The Brazen Serpent: Life for Those Who Looked

Numbers 21 introduces another extraordinary incident. Israel became discouraged because of the way and began speaking against God and Moses. Their complaint concerned the absence of satisfactory bread and water, although God had been miraculously supplying their necessities. They even declared, "our soul loatheth this light bread." That was a reference to the very provision sustaining their lives. Unbelief has a remarkable ability to despise what mercy supplies while demanding something else. The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and many Israelites died from their bites. Eventually the people confessed their sin and asked Moses to pray that the serpents might be taken away. Moses interceded, and God gave an unexpected instruction. He was to make a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole, and those who had been bitten were to look upon it and live. The remedy was neither a military campaign against the serpents nor a medical discovery devised by Moses. It was a particular means appointed by God for that occasion.

Numbers 21:9 records that Moses made a serpent of brass and placed it upon a pole. When a bitten man looked upon it, he lived. The command was simple, but simplicity must not be confused with insignificance. The Israelite did not possess healing power in his eyeballs, and the brass did not contain some secret substance capable of neutralizing

venom throughout the camp. God had attached His promise to the appointed act of looking. The dying man was responsible to respond to what God had said. Centuries later, the Lord Jesus Christ supplied the deeper significance in John 3:14–15: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Christ identified the lifted serpent as a type pointing forward to His own lifting up. The account therefore teaches far more than temporary physical preservation. It directs attention toward the saving work of the Son of God.

There is a further warning in the history of that brass serpent. Second Kings 18:4 records that Hezekiah destroyed it because the children of Israel had begun burning incense to it. He called it Nehushtan. An object once associated with a genuine miracle had become an object of idolatrous devotion. Consider the foolishness. The LORD had used that serpent to preserve lives, but generations afterward people were worshipping the instrument instead of the God who supplied the remedy. Men still possess an astonishing talent for making idols out of things God once used. A healing testimony becomes a sacred formula. An object becomes a charm. A preacher becomes untouchable because somebody claims to have recovered after attending his meeting. Before long, the glory that belongs to God is being distributed among brass ornaments and religious celebrities. The lesson is plain: an instrument of divine blessing must never be mistaken for the source of divine power. The serpent could not heal independently of God's word, and neither can any object or person today.

5. Naaman the Syrian: The Proud Man and the Humble Remedy

Second Kings 5 introduces Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria. He was a great man with his master, honourable, mighty in valour, and yet a leper. There is a sermon in that little word "but." His military decorations could not remove the disease. His royal connections could not purchase healthy skin. His reputation might open palace doors, but it could not command leprosy to depart. A captive Israelite maid serving Naaman's wife spoke of the prophet in Samaria, and through that unlikely testimony the Syrian commander learned where help might be found. Eventually Naaman came to Elisha with horses and chariot, carrying the dignity and expectations of an important man. Elisha did not arrange a grand reception. He sent a messenger with a simple instruction: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." The great commander had come prepared for an impressive ceremony, and God's prophet gave him directions to a river.

Naaman became furious. He expected Elisha to come out, stand before him, call upon the LORD, strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. He also considered the rivers of

Damascus superior to the waters of Israel. Human pride is a remarkable thing. Here stood a man with a disease he could not cure, complaining that the remedy offered by God's prophet lacked sufficient grandeur. His servants finally reasoned with him that if the prophet had commanded some great deed, he would have done it. Why refuse something simple? Naaman humbled himself, went down to Jordan, dipped seven times according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh returned like that of a little child. The healing was genuine and complete. Jordan had not become a universal treatment center for leprosy, nor had Elisha discovered a medical procedure for every Syrian commander. The LORD had attached His promise to a specific instruction, and Naaman received the promised result when he obeyed.

Naaman returned acknowledging that there was no God in all the earth but in Israel. Elisha refused the reward Naaman offered, maintaining a clear distinction between God's work and a financial transaction. Gehazi later pursued Naaman and obtained gifts through deception, bringing judgment upon himself. The contrast is striking: the prophet refused payment for a miracle, while his servant tried to make merchandise of what God had freely done. There is also a dispensational lesson in Naaman's identity. He was a Syrian Gentile, not an Israelite under the Mosaic covenant, yet God chose to heal him. In Luke 4:27, Jesus reminded His hearers that many lepers were in Israel during Elisha's time, but none was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. That observation alone should prevent careless universal claims. God was not operating a healing assembly line in which every leper automatically received restoration. He was exercising sovereign authority and demonstrating mercy according to His purpose. A miracle proves what God can do; it does not necessarily establish what He has promised to do for everyone.

6. Hezekiah's Boil: Prayer, Figs, and Fifteen More Years

Second Kings 20 presents a king lying under the sentence of death. Hezekiah was sick, and Isaiah brought him a solemn message from the LORD: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." That is not the kind of announcement a man wishes to receive from a visiting preacher. Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed, reminding God of his walk before Him. He wept sore. Before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, the LORD instructed him to return with another message. God had heard the prayer and seen the tears. He promised, "behold, I will heal thee," and declared that He would add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. Here is a genuine case of divine healing following earnest prayer. The LORD who announced approaching death also possessed the authority to extend the king's days. No human physician had issued the original sentence, and no human physician could have guaranteed the additional years. The outcome rested in God's hands.

The account includes another detail that certain religious enthusiasts would prefer to overlook. Second Kings 20:7 states, "For Isaiah had said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered." God promised the healing, and a physical substance was applied to the afflicted place. The passage does not explain the medical properties of the figs, nor does it authorize us to prescribe figs as a universal treatment for dangerous infections. It records the means employed in this particular event. But it certainly destroys the foolish notion that the use of a material remedy automatically demonstrates unbelief. If applying something to a wound were an insult to divine power, somebody should have informed Isaiah before he gave the instruction. Hezekiah did not have to choose between trusting the LORD and following the appointed means. He did both. The same account records an extraordinary sign involving the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, confirming that the God who promised recovery controlled matters far beyond the limitations of ordinary human ability.

Hezekiah's healing also exposes the difference between an extension of earthly life and permanent redemption from death. Fifteen years were added, but fifteen years are not eternity. The king eventually died. His recovery was real, but it did not make him incorruptible. Furthermore, Second Chronicles 32:24–26 records that Hezekiah's heart was lifted up after his remarkable deliverance and that he later humbled himself for that pride. Second Kings 20 also records his dealings with the Babylonian envoys and Isaiah's warning concerning future judgment. A man may receive an extraordinary blessing and still face serious tests afterward. The recovery of his body does not automatically perfect his conduct. The passage therefore teaches several truths together: God hears prayer, God can extend life, God may employ practical means, and recovered people remain responsible to walk humbly before Him. No one has the right to take Hezekiah's fifteen years and announce that every dying Christian can claim an identical extension. Hezekiah received a particular promise. Our duty is to believe the promise God actually gave, not manufacture another.

7. Job's Suffering: When the Sick Man Is Not the Guilty Man

The book of Job delivers a necessary correction to anyone who has concluded that sickness always proves personal disobedience. Job 1:1 describes him as "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." The LORD Himself confirmed that testimony in Job 1:8. Yet the man whom God commended became the man whose body was afflicted with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. Job sat among the ashes and scraped himself with a potsherd. He experienced physical misery, financial devastation, bereavement, and the unbearable confusion of suffering without understanding the heavenly events recorded in the opening chapters. His affliction did not

begin because God discovered some secret rebellion that the reader had overlooked. Scripture reveals the circumstances plainly. Satan accused Job, and God permitted the testing within appointed limits. The reader knows something Job's friends did not know, and that information makes their confident accusations particularly disgraceful.

Job's friends constructed explanations that sounded impressive until measured against the facts revealed by God. They assumed that such suffering must indicate corresponding wickedness. If Job would acknowledge the sins they imagined, they reasoned, his troubles could be explained. Their arguments possessed the familiar attraction of a theory that cannot be disproved by the person suffering under it. If the sick man protests his innocence, accuse him of pride. If he continues suffering, call it evidence that he has not repented sufficiently. If he recovers, congratulate the theory. It is a convenient arrangement for the accuser, though a miserable one for the afflicted. But in Job 42:7 the LORD rebuked those friends because they had not spoken of Him the thing that was right as Job had. Their speeches were religious, lengthy, and deeply mistaken. God later restored Job's fortunes, but the restoration did not make the friends' earlier accusations true. Their interpretation of his suffering had been wrong from the beginning.

The same error appears in John 9 when the disciples asked Jesus whether the man born blind had sinned or whether his parents had sinned, causing his blindness. Christ answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." He was not declaring the family sinless in every respect; He was rejecting the proposed explanation for that particular affliction. Job and the man born blind establish that we cannot diagnose someone's spiritual standing by examining his medical condition. Certainly, sin may produce physical consequences, and Scripture records cases of direct divine judgment. But other afflictions arise without the specific guilt religious accusers presume. Paul himself would later testify of a thorn in the flesh that remained despite repeated prayer. The believer must therefore refuse two equally unscriptural conclusions: that God never uses sickness in His dealings with men, and that every sick person must have committed some undisclosed offense. The Bible permits neither extreme. God's power is absolute, but human knowledge is not.

Conclusion

The Old Testament record leaves no reasonable doubt that the LORD possesses unlimited authority over human health. He sweetened bitter waters, afflicted and restored Miriam, preserved Israelites from deadly serpent bites, cleansed Naaman of leprosy, extended Hezekiah's life, and restored Job after dreadful suffering. These miracles were not inventions of religious imagination. They were recorded acts of God, demonstrating His power, holiness, mercy, and purposes. Yet the same record refuses to conform to the

simple formulas popular in modern healing circles. Miriam was required to remain outside the camp. Naaman had to wash in Jordan. Hezekiah received treatment with figs. Job suffered without the secret wickedness his friends alleged. The dying Israelites looked upon an appointed sign, while later Israelites turned that same sign into an idol. The details matter because God put them in the Book. A faithful preacher has no authority to erase the circumstances surrounding a miracle merely because the remaining sentence would make a more profitable advertisement. The Bible is not a collection of promotional material for religious performers.

There is no contradiction between trusting God, praying for healing, and receiving appropriate medical attention. The LORD may answer through extraordinary intervention, through ordinary means, through a course of treatment, or by providing grace to endure an affliction that remains. Christians should pray earnestly without pretending to command the outcome. They should care for the sick rather than condemn them, assist the suffering rather than interrogate them, and speak what Scripture says rather than invent promises Scripture has not made. A person confined to a hospital bed is not automatically a second-class believer. A child undergoing treatment has not necessarily failed a spiritual examination. An elderly saint whose strength is fading may possess more genuine faith than a healthy religious performer who has never learned what it means to trust God through suffering. The apostle Paul would later write that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. That is not an excuse for unbelief. It is a truth that leaves God's sovereignty intact when the body does not recover as quickly as men desire.

The final lesson reaches beyond every temporary healing recorded in the Old Testament. Naaman's skin was restored, but Naaman eventually died. Hezekiah received fifteen more years, but his earthly life still ended. The Israelites who survived the fiery serpents did not thereby become immortal. Every one of those miracles demonstrated God's power without removing the universal problem of bodily corruption. That greater deliverance belongs to the completed redemption secured through the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 8:23 identifies the future hope of the believer as "the redemption of our body," and 1 Corinthians 15 declares that the corruptible must put on incorruption and the mortal must put on immortality. Until then, Christians inhabit bodies that remain subject to weakness and death, even while possessing eternal life in Christ. God remains the LORD who heals, but He has promised something greater than a temporary recovery. He has promised a resurrection in which disease will never return and death will never reclaim its victim. A healed man may live another twenty years. A resurrected saint will never die again. That is the difference between a temporary mercy and the final victory of redemption.

2 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – The Great Physician and the Miracles of the Kingdom

Key Passage: Matthew 4:23–24 (KJV)

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.”

There was a time when the blind opened their eyes at the command of a Man who had never attended a medical school, when lepers walked away clean without a prescription, when crippled men carried the beds that had carried them, and when dead men heard a voice that the grave itself could not silence. That Man was the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was not conducting a religious entertainment program. He was not auditioning for a television audience, building a financial empire, or trying to persuade an uncertain crowd that something supernatural might happen if everybody worked up enough excitement. He was manifesting the authority of Almighty God in human flesh. Matthew 4:23 declares that He healed “all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” There is no uncertainty in that statement. The miracles were genuine, visible, and undeniable. The sick were healed, the blind saw, and the lame walked. Yet the same verse identifies the message accompanying those miracles as “the gospel of the kingdom.” That little expression is the doctrinal key to understanding the ministry. Remove the kingdom from the context, and a man can turn the earthly ministry of Israel’s Messiah into almost anything his religious imagination desires.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into a nation that had been waiting centuries for the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. Israel had received the law through Moses, the prophets had announced the coming Messiah, and the throne of David had been promised an everlasting establishment through his royal descendant. Isaiah foretold a coming King whose government would bring righteousness, peace, and restoration. Jeremiah announced a righteous Branch. Micah identified Bethlehem as the birthplace of the coming ruler. When John the Baptist appeared, his message was, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Jesus Christ began preaching the same announcement in Matthew 4:17. These were not disconnected religious slogans. The King had appeared, and the promised kingdom was being proclaimed to the nation. His miracles furnished visible evidence of His identity and authority. The people were not being invited to admire an unusually gifted physician. They were being confronted with the

promised Son of David, the Son of God, standing among them and exercising powers that belonged to God alone.

The difficulty begins when men confuse what Christ demonstrated with what He promised to every Christian living after His death, resurrection, and ascension. Nobody who believes the King James Bible should question His ability to heal. The question is whether the historical record of His miracles constitutes an unconditional guarantee that every believer must presently enjoy uninterrupted physical health. Scripture does not teach that conclusion. The same Bible that records Christ healing the multitudes also records Paul suffering bodily infirmities, Timothy experiencing frequent ailments, and Trophimus being left sick at Miletum. The Lord's power had not diminished between Matthew and Second Timothy. What changed was the historical setting and the administration of God's revealed purposes. A man who refuses to distinguish Israel from the Church will eventually make as much confusion with healing as another man makes with baptism, tongues, or the kingdom itself. God never authorized anyone to turn the four Gospels into a catalogue of promises without first reading the address on the envelope.

1. The Gospel of the Kingdom and the Authority of the King

Matthew 4:23 identifies three prominent activities in the Lord's Galilean ministry. He taught in the synagogues, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and healed every kind of sickness and disease described in the passage. The order deserves attention. His teaching established the truth, His preaching announced the kingdom, and His miracles demonstrated the authority behind the message. The healing was not an independent business operating alongside His ministry. It accompanied the proclamation of the King. Matthew 9:35 repeats substantially the same description, showing that this was a continuing feature of His earthly work. When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles in Matthew 10, He instructed them to go specifically to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Their message was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and their commission included healing the sick, cleansing lepers, and raising the dead. The authority to perform those signs was granted by Christ in connection with the kingdom announcement. A preacher who borrows the miracles while dismissing the kingdom setting has left the foundation behind and carried away the furniture.

The kingdom proclaimed in Matthew was not an imaginary arrangement invented to replace the promises given to Israel. God had promised David a throne, a kingdom, and a royal descendant in 2 Samuel 7:12–16. Isaiah 9:6–7 spoke of the government resting upon the Messiah's shoulder and His reign upon the throne of David. Daniel 2:44 foretold a kingdom established by the God of heaven that would never be destroyed. These passages concern real divine authority and the promised restoration of righteous government. Jesus

Christ was the rightful King, but Israel's leaders would reject Him. Matthew 12 records His enemies attributing His works to Beelzebub, even after witnessing evidence of divine power. Their problem was not a shortage of signs. They had enough evidence to condemn their unbelief, but religious pride can stare a miracle in the face and still prefer its own explanation. The kingdom was genuinely announced, the King was genuinely present, and the signs were genuinely performed. None of those truths permits the substitution of the present Church for the nation originally addressed.

There is an important distinction between the gospel of the kingdom preached during Christ's earthly ministry and the full gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection proclaimed after Calvary. First Corinthians 15:1–4 identifies the gospel preached by Paul, declaring that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. During much of the Gospel record, the disciples themselves did not understand that Christ must die and rise again. Matthew 16:21–23 demonstrates Peter's resistance when the Lord began openly revealing His approaching suffering. Consequently, nobody should pretend that the disciples were preaching the completed historical facts of Calvary before those events occurred. The kingdom message concerned Israel's promised Messiah and His approaching reign, while the finished work of redemption would subsequently be proclaimed with the fuller light of the resurrection. Both messages center upon the same Lord Jesus Christ, but their historical content and setting must be distinguished. Rightly dividing the Word does not divide Christ. It prevents men from mixing divine instructions that God gave at different times for different purposes.

2. The Leper, the Centurion, and the Authority of One Word

Matthew 8 begins with a leper approaching the Lord after He came down from the mountain. The man worshipped Him and said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” That statement contained more genuine understanding than many elaborate religious speeches. The leper did not question Christ's ability. He acknowledged His authority and submitted the matter to His will. Notice carefully what he did not say. He did not declare that healing was his automatic possession, accuse God of withholding an entitlement, or demand that Christ fulfill an obligation. He said, “if thou wilt.” Jesus put forth His hand, touched him, and answered, “I will; be thou clean.” Immediately the leprosy departed. The miracle required no lengthy ceremony and no repeated attempts. Christ's will and Christ's word accomplished what human ability could not. The disease obeyed the Lord because its Creator had spoken. When the Almighty commands, even corruption must recognize its superior.

Christ then instructed the cleansed man to show himself to the priest and offer the gift commanded by Moses, “for a testimony unto them” (Matthew 8:4). That instruction is

tremendously important. The Lord was operating in Israel under the law, and the cleansing of leprosy had requirements established in Leviticus 14. The priests were responsible for examining the condition and administering the prescribed ceremonial procedures. Jesus directed the man to the priestly authorities, thereby placing the miracle before the very religious system that should have recognized His identity. The healing was not merely personal relief; it became testimony concerning the Messiah. There is a considerable difference between Christ commanding a cleansed Israelite to fulfill the Mosaic requirement and a modern preacher telling a member of the Body of Christ to claim the same event as an unrestricted promise. The former belongs to the historical record. The latter requires scriptural authority that the preacher has not supplied. Even the details surrounding the miracle testify that the account must be read in its proper dispensational setting.

The centurion who approached Jesus in Matthew 8:5–13 supplied another extraordinary demonstration of Christ's authority. His servant was grievously tormented with the palsy, but the centurion recognized that the Lord did not have to enter his house to heal him. Being a man under authority, with soldiers under him, he understood the power of a command. He said, “speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” Jesus marvelled at his faith and declared that He had not found such great faith in Israel. The servant was healed in the selfsame hour. Here was a Gentile military officer recognizing authority that many religious leaders in Israel refused to acknowledge. Christ was not limited by distance, personal contact, or the supposed power of a particular meeting place. He needed neither an examination room nor an elaborate performance. One word was sufficient. The centurion understood that the issue was not the strength of his own declaration but the authority of the One speaking. Faith recognized the King; it did not attempt to become the king.

3. Every Sick Person Healed and Every Devil Cast Out

Matthew 8:14–15 records that Jesus entered Peter's house and found his wife's mother sick of a fever. He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them. The healing was immediate and practical. She did not spend the remainder of the account lying in bed claiming to have received something invisible. She got up and served. The departure of the fever produced an observable result. Matthew then records that, when evening came, many possessed with devils were brought to Christ. He cast out the spirits with His word and healed all that were sick. Notice that the passage distinguishes devil possession from physical sickness while demonstrating Christ's authority over both. He did not require the afflicted to perform extraordinary spiritual exercises before delivering them. He spoke, and the devils departed. He healed, and the sick recovered. The Lord's ministry

was characterized by actual results, not claims whose only evidence consisted of somebody announcing that something had happened.

Matthew 8:16 is particularly troublesome for those who claim the same unrestricted healing powers today. The verse says He “healed all that were sick.” Not merely those whose conditions were difficult to verify. Not merely those who could walk a few steps after being assisted from a chair. Not merely those who reported a sensation of warmth or experienced a temporary emotional improvement. The Lord healed the sick people brought before Him in that scene. His authority was not restricted to the ailments most likely to disappear naturally. When Scripture describes Him cleansing lepers, restoring sight, raising the dead, and making crippled men whole, it records extraordinary works beyond ordinary human ability. If a man announces that he possesses the same authority, it is entirely reasonable to ask why his demonstrations do not resemble the biblical record. A genuine miracle does not require dishonest exaggeration to become impressive. The Lord Jesus Christ never needed a publicity department to manufacture the evidence His power supplied.

The Gospel accounts also demonstrate that Christ did not perform miracles merely to satisfy human curiosity. Religious leaders repeatedly sought signs while refusing the testimony already before them. Matthew 12:38–39 records the scribes and Pharisees requesting another sign, and Christ rebuked their unbelief. In John 6, crowds followed Him after witnessing miraculous provision, yet He exposed their interest in the loaves rather than the spiritual truth His work revealed. The man who follows Christ only because he expects an endless supply of earthly benefits has not understood the purpose of the miracles. Jesus did not come merely to keep sinners healthy while leaving them unreconciled to God. Physical healing displayed His authority, but the deeper need of mankind was redemption from sin. A person can possess strong legs, clear eyesight, excellent hearing, and a perfectly functioning heart while remaining spiritually lost. The Great Physician came to deal with a disease no earthly hospital can remove: the guilt and corruption of sin before a holy God.

4. Isaiah's Prophecy and the Miracles That Identified the Messiah

Isaiah 35:5–6 contains a remarkable description of divine restoration: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” These are not vague religious expressions that can be fulfilled by persuading people to feel better about their circumstances. Blind eyes opening, deaf ears hearing, lame bodies walking, and speech being restored are identifiable works. The chapter also describes the wilderness becoming fruitful, waters breaking out in the desert, and the redeemed returning to Zion with

everlasting joy. Its prophetic setting reaches forward to the restoration associated with the LORD's coming and Israel's promised blessings. Yet the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ displayed the very powers that would characterize that promised restoration. When He caused the blind to see and the lame to walk, He was demonstrating that the One promised by the prophets had arrived. The miracles were not random displays of supernatural ability. They were royal credentials presented in the language of Israel's own Scriptures.

Matthew 11 provides a decisive connection between the prophecy and the ministry of Christ. John the Baptist, imprisoned and approaching the end of his earthly service, sent disciples to ask Jesus, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” The Lord answered by directing attention to His works: “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” That answer was a tremendous declaration of Messianic identity. Christ did not produce an impressive certificate signed by Jerusalem's religious authorities. He supplied the evidence that the prophets had already described. John knew the Scriptures and would recognize their significance. The Lord's answer amounted to a declaration that the promised works were being manifested before the nation. If the religious leaders wished to dispute His identity, they needed to account for the evidence. Calling light darkness does not extinguish the light. It merely identifies the condition of the man refusing to see.

The fulfillment of prophetic signs during Christ's earthly ministry must be distinguished from the complete establishment of the promised kingdom. Isaiah 35 contains more than the healing of individuals. It looks toward a transformed order in which the redeemed return with singing and sorrow and sighing flee away. The Lord's first advent provided genuine evidence of His identity, but Israel's national restoration and the full manifestation of the kingdom await His return. The prophecies concerning His suffering and those concerning His glorious reign must not be thrown together as though every promised event occurred during His first appearance. Isaiah 53 presents the suffering Servant, while Isaiah 35 describes the restoration associated with His coming power. The same Messiah accomplishes both, but Scripture distinguishes their fulfillment. Modern religion often prefers to collect the blessings of the kingdom while ignoring its King, its covenant setting, and its future establishment. That is a convenient arrangement for the religious imagination, but it is no substitute for believing the Bible.

5. The Anointed One at Nazareth and the Prophecy He Divided

Luke 4:16–21 records one of the most revealing moments in the earthly ministry of Christ. Jesus returned to Nazareth, entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to

read. The book of Isaiah was delivered unto Him, and He found the place describing the Spirit of the LORD resting upon the Anointed One. The passage announced good tidings, deliverance, recovering of sight to the blind, liberty for those who were bruised, and the acceptable year of the LORD. After reading, Jesus closed the book, returned it to the minister, sat down, and declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Consider the circumstances. The promised Messiah was standing in an Israelite synagogue, reading an Israelite prophet, announcing the fulfillment of a prophecy concerning His own ministry. The setting could hardly be more specific. Yet some men read those verses as though the chief purpose of Isaiah had been to provide material for a modern healing advertisement.

An extraordinary detail appears when Luke 4 is compared with Isaiah 61:1–2. Isaiah's prophecy proceeds from the acceptable year of the LORD to “the day of vengeance of our God.” But Jesus stopped before reading that latter expression. He closed the book at the point corresponding to His first-advent ministry. The day of vengeance belonged to the future exercise of divine judgment, not the immediate work He was announcing in Nazareth. This is a powerful example of rightly dividing the Word of truth. The Lord Himself distinguished events placed close together within the prophetic passage. The first coming involved preaching, healing, suffering, and offering Himself as the sacrifice for sins. His future appearing will involve judgment and the establishment of His promised reign. A man who cannot recognize that distinction will eventually mix the cross with the crown, the present age with the Millennium, and the Church with Israel. The Bible does not become contradictory when its divisions are observed. It becomes contradictory when men erase them.

The congregation at Nazareth eventually demonstrated how stubborn religious unbelief can become. Jesus reminded them of Elijah being sent to the widow of Sarepta and Elisha's cleansing of Naaman the Syrian while other lepers remained uncleansed. Those examples exposed the presumption that divine blessings could be controlled through national privilege or personal entitlement. The people became furious and attempted to cast Him down from the brow of the hill. What a spectacle! The promised Messiah had just announced good tidings, and His own townspeople responded by attempting to kill Him. Their reaction revealed that their deepest problem was not an absence of religious information. They were unwilling to receive the truth. They wanted a Messiah who would satisfy their expectations while leaving their pride undisturbed. That same spirit survives whenever people demand divine benefits while rejecting the authority of God's Word. Christ's miracles were never designed to become bargaining chips in man's attempt to dictate terms to Heaven.

6. The Man Born Blind and the Works of God Made Manifest

John 9 begins with Jesus passing by a man who had been blind from his birth. The disciples immediately raised a theological question: “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Their assumption was that the physical condition must be explained by a particular act of sin. Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” He was not declaring that the man or his parents had never committed a sin. He was rejecting the proposed explanation for this man's blindness. The affliction was not the result of the specific guilt the disciples imagined. This passage ought to silence a considerable amount of religious foolishness directed toward suffering people. A man has no business examining another person's medical condition and announcing the hidden sin supposedly responsible for it when God has revealed no such information. The disciples asked a question. The Lord corrected their assumption. That correction deserves to be heard.

Jesus then spat upon the ground, made clay of the spittle, anointed the man's eyes, and commanded him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went, washed, and came seeing. Notice again the variety of methods employed throughout Christ's ministry. He healed the centurion's servant without going near him. He touched Peter's mother-in-law. He cleansed a leper with a word and touch. Here He used clay and directed the man to wash. The power was never contained in the material substance or the external procedure. It belonged to Christ. The use of clay did not establish a permanent medical treatment for congenital blindness any more than Naaman's washing established Jordan as a universal cure for leprosy. God employed different means according to His pleasure. The man born blind was not restored because he had mastered some secret spiritual technique. He received sight through the authority of Jesus Christ, and the result was unmistakable. His neighbours recognized that the man who had previously sat begging could now see.

The religious authorities responded in a manner that exposed their own spiritual blindness. Instead of rejoicing that a man born blind had received sight, they became occupied with challenging the circumstances of the miracle and the authority of the One who performed it. The healed man eventually delivered a wonderfully plain testimony: “one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). The Pharisees could interrogate him, question his parents, debate the Sabbath, and object to Jesus, but they could not make the restored eyesight disappear. His physical eyes had been opened while their hardened hearts resisted the light standing before them. The chapter therefore distinguishes bodily sight from spiritual understanding. A person can possess perfect vision and remain blind to the truth of God. Christ had done more than demonstrate the ability to repair human eyes. He had exposed the rebellion of men who preferred their religious authority to the testimony of the Son of God.

7. The Purpose of the Signs and the Difference Between Christ and the Showman

John 20:30–31 provides one of the clearest explanations of why the miracles of Christ were recorded: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” There is the stated purpose. The signs testify to His identity and direct men toward faith in Him. Their ultimate purpose was not to create an endless fascination with supernatural experiences. They were evidence that Jesus was the promised Christ, the Son of God. Consider the healing of the man sick of the palsy in Mark 2. Jesus first declared forgiveness of sins, provoking objections from the scribes. He then healed the man's body to demonstrate His authority to forgive sins. The visible miracle confirmed an invisible authority. The sign pointed beyond itself to the Person performing it. That is the biblical order: the miracle serves the revelation of Christ, not the reputation of the miracle worker.

The raising of Lazarus in John 11 supplies an even greater demonstration. Lazarus had been dead four days, and his body was already associated with the corruption of death. Martha understood that the grave contained her brother, but Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection, and the life.” He then called Lazarus forth, and the dead man came out. Here was authority over death itself. Christ did not conduct an experiment, seek approval from the mourners, or depend upon an excited audience to generate sufficient confidence. The man who had been dead was alive. Yet Lazarus's restoration was not the same as the final resurrection of the believer's glorified body. Lazarus returned to ordinary mortal life and would eventually face death again. The miracle demonstrated the power of the One who would later conquer the grave through His own resurrection. A temporary victory over sickness or death points toward a greater, permanent victory in Christ.

Modern claims of possessing Christ's miraculous authority must be examined by the standard of Scripture, not protected from examination by religious excitement. Second Corinthians 12:12 speaks of “the signs of an apostle,” and Hebrews 2:3–4 connects signs and wonders with God's confirmation of the message. The apostles performed extraordinary miracles by authority granted to them, not by possessing independent divine power. Jesus Christ, however, is the source of that authority. No modern claimant occupies His position. God remains perfectly capable of healing today, and genuine answers to prayer should be received with thanksgiving. But that does not require accepting every person who advertises a healing ministry. When someone claims that blindness has disappeared, paralysis has ended, or a deadly disease has been cured, the claim may be examined honestly. Real compassion does not demand gullibility. A suffering person

deserves truth, not an impressive performance that disappears when the evidence is requested.

Conclusion

The earthly healing ministry of Jesus Christ was an extraordinary demonstration of divine authority inseparably connected to His identity as Israel's promised Messiah. He preached the gospel of the kingdom, healed the sick, cleansed lepers, cast out devils, restored sight, and raised the dead. These works fulfilled prophetic expectations and furnished unmistakable testimony that the King had come. The miracles were not accidental interruptions in His teaching. They belonged to the revelation of His Person and the announcement of the kingdom. Matthew presented the King exercising authority over disease. Isaiah had foretold the works that would accompany divine restoration. John the Baptist received confirmation through the evidence of those works. The man born blind received sight, and Lazarus came out of the grave. All these events direct attention to the Lord Jesus Christ, not to human techniques for manipulating divine power. The sick were genuinely healed because the Son of God possessed authority over their conditions. There was no power shortage in Heaven and no uncertainty about the One who commanded the miracles.

Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus Christ healed particular individuals during His earthly ministry does not establish that every Christian presently possesses an unconditional right to immediate physical restoration. The promise of final bodily redemption is certain, but the timing of that redemption must be determined by Scripture. Romans 8:23 identifies believers as waiting for the redemption of the body, and Philippians 3:20–21 declares that the Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. Until that transformation, Christians remain subject to bodily weakness, sickness, injury, and death. God may grant healing in answer to prayer, and believers should seek His mercy without hesitation. But no man has the authority to announce that continued illness proves insufficient faith or that accepting medical care demonstrates unbelief. The great miracles of the Gospels establish Christ's authority. They do not authorize modern religious performers to promise outcomes God has not promised. A preacher who claims more than the Bible says has not increased faith; he has departed from its foundation.

The greatest truth in these passages is not that Jesus Christ can make a sick man well, although He certainly can. It is that the One who opened blind eyes also possesses authority to forgive sins, give eternal life, and raise the dead. Every person healed during His earthly ministry eventually faced the limitations of mortal existence, but those who belong to Him possess a hope that extends beyond the grave. The leper could become clean and later die. The blind man could receive sight and later be buried. Lazarus could

leave his tomb and eventually return to the dust. But the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead never to die again. His resurrection establishes the certainty of the believer's future victory over corruption and mortality. The Great Physician is not merely the remedy for a temporary illness. He is the Saviour who purchased eternal redemption through His blood. The miracles of the kingdom revealed His identity, the cross accomplished His sacrifice, and the resurrection declared His triumph. Faithful preaching must preserve all three truths without confusing their historical setting or diminishing their glory. God has not promised that every Christian will leave the hospital tomorrow, but He has promised that every redeemed body will ultimately leave the grave. That is a healing no disease can reverse, no physician can improve, and no death can defeat.

3 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – The Signs of an Apostle and the Healing Miracles of Acts

Key Passage: 2 Corinthians 12:12 (KJV)

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

There is something remarkably convenient about a religious system that claims to possess the powers of the apostles but becomes terribly offended when somebody asks to see the evidence. Peter commanded a man crippled from birth to rise and walk, and the fellow went leaping through the temple. Paul healed a man at Lystra who had never walked, and the entire city became so excited that the people nearly worshipped him. The apostles performed miracles that could be examined, witnessed, and verified. They did not require a carefully managed atmosphere, a sympathetic television audience, or an impressive collection of unverifiable testimonies. When a man was healed, he was healed. When the dead were raised, they were alive. When devils departed, the afflicted person was delivered. The book of Acts records extraordinary manifestations of divine power, but it also explains why those manifestations accompanied the men through whom God was establishing the foundational testimony of the New Testament. The miracles were not religious decorations. They were credentials issued by Heaven.

Second Corinthians 12:12 calls them “the signs of an apostle,” and that expression ought to settle more confusion than a hundred healing conventions. Paul did not identify these works as the ordinary accomplishments of every Christian in every generation. He appealed to them as evidence of his apostolic authority. The same man who could perform remarkable miracles would later testify that God refused to remove his own thorn in the

flesh. The same apostle who witnessed extraordinary healings instructed Timothy concerning his frequent infirmities and left Trophimus sick at Miletum. Something is wrong with a doctrine that celebrates Paul's miracles but becomes mysteriously silent when Paul himself remains afflicted. The difficulty is not in Scripture. The difficulty is in a system that gathers every favorable verse into one basket and quietly leaves the troublesome passages behind. A Bible believer must take the entire record, including the portions that interrupt an attractive religious theory. The Holy Ghost did not inspire Acts to furnish promotional material for modern miracle workers.

The book of Acts is a transitional book, and failure to recognize that fact produces doctrinal confusion from beginning to end. It begins with the risen Lord speaking to Jewish apostles concerning the kingdom of God, continues through the apostolic testimony to Israel, and follows the gospel outward toward the Gentiles through the ministry of Paul. Peter dominates the earlier chapters, while Paul becomes the principal human instrument in the later narrative. Signs accompany the preaching, but the historical setting must be respected. God was confirming His testimony through chosen witnesses during a foundational period when the completed New Testament Scriptures had not yet been delivered to the churches. None of this suggests that God has lost His power to heal, nor does it forbid Christians from praying for the sick today. It means that the extraordinary authority exercised by an apostle cannot be claimed merely because a modern preacher has acquired a platform, a microphone, and an enthusiastic congregation. The distinction is between the power of God and the authority He specifically entrusted to particular men.

1. Mark Sixteen and the Signs That Followed

Mark 16:17–18 records the risen Lord declaring, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.” The following verse includes taking up serpents, protection from deadly things, and laying hands upon the sick so that they recover. These are extraordinary promises, and there is no need to explain away their supernatural character. The Lord was addressing His disciples in connection with their commission to preach the gospel. Verse 20 then records what followed: “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” Notice the explanation. The Lord was confirming the word through accompanying signs. The signs had a purpose beyond the physical benefit received by those who were healed. They testified that the message being proclaimed carried divine authority. The passage does not authorize anyone to select the healing portion while pretending the other signs were never included.

There is a peculiar inconsistency among those who quote Mark 16 as though it were an unrestricted commission to every modern believer. They frequently insist upon the laying

on of hands while becoming remarkably cautious about serpents and deadly poison. Evidently, the healing promise is considered permanent, but the snake portion requires careful interpretation. A man should be consistent with the passage he claims to believe. Acts 28 records Paul surviving the bite of a venomous creature on Melita, demonstrating the kind of supernatural protection described in the commission. Acts also records extraordinary healings and the manifestation of languages through the Holy Ghost. The biblical record establishes that these signs genuinely occurred. It does not establish that every individual believer subsequently possessed every sign or that the entire collection must appear throughout every succeeding generation. First Corinthians 12:29–30 specifically asks whether all are apostles, whether all work miracles, and whether all possess gifts of healing. The expected answer is no.

Hebrews 2:3–4 supplies another important explanation, describing the great salvation first spoken by the Lord and confirmed by those who heard Him, “God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.” That final expression matters. The gifts and miracles were distributed according to God's will, not according to the demands of men. The passage looks back upon the confirmation of the message through eyewitnesses and divine testimony. Hebrews does not teach that God became powerless afterward, but neither does it establish an endlessly renewable office of apostleship. A sign points to something greater than itself. A road sign may tell a traveler where the city is located, but nobody with good sense builds his house beneath the sign and claims he has reached his destination. The apostolic signs directed attention toward the authority of Christ and the truth of the message. The object was never to make the sign itself the center of Christian faith.

2. The Beautiful Gate and the Man Who Had Never Walked

Acts 3 opens with Peter and John going up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. The setting is unmistakably Jewish. The temple remained a central place of activity, and these apostles were continuing their public testimony in Jerusalem. A certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried daily to the gate called Beautiful to ask alms from those entering the temple. He was not a man experiencing occasional discomfort in his knees. He had never possessed the ordinary ability to walk. His condition was longstanding, public, and familiar to the people who passed that entrance. When he saw Peter and John, he expected money. Peter answered, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” The apostle was not advertising personal greatness. He was acting under the authority of the risen Christ, whose name the rulers of Israel had recently rejected.

Peter took the man by the right hand and lifted him up, and Acts 3:7 declares that immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. The next verse says he leaped up, stood, walked, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. That is a miracle worth reading carefully. The man did not require several weeks of rehabilitation before discovering whether anything had happened. His strength came immediately. His movement was visible. His restoration was complete enough for him to walk and leap. The crowd recognized him as the same man who had sat begging at the Beautiful gate, and they were filled with wonder and amazement. There was no opportunity to substitute an unfamiliar person and claim a cure. His identity and previous condition were common knowledge. A man who has been carried to the same gate for years makes a rather difficult subject for a counterfeit testimony when the entire neighbourhood knows he cannot walk.

Peter immediately corrected the crowd's tendency to focus upon the human instruments. Acts 3:12 records him asking, “why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” He then preached the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the glorification of His Son Jesus, and the guilt of those who had denied the Holy One and the Just. Verse 16 identifies faith in Christ's name as central to the healing and declares that the faith which is by Him had given the man perfect soundness before them all. The miracle became the occasion for an unmistakable sermon to Israel concerning the rejected and risen Messiah. Peter did not convert the meeting into a celebration of his personal gift. He preached Jesus Christ, repentance, and the prophetic promises. The man received strength in his legs, but the multitude received a testimony concerning the Son of God. That was the greater purpose of the sign.

3. The Apostles' Hands and the Shadow of Peter

Acts 5:12 states, “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.” The wording is deliberate. The passage identifies the apostles as the instruments through whom these extraordinary works were being performed. Their testimony was public, and the growing opposition of the religious authorities did not prevent God from confirming His message. The believers were gathered in Solomon's porch, and multitudes were added to the Lord. The surrounding context includes the solemn judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, demonstrating that divine power was not confined to pleasant manifestations. God could expose hypocrisy and execute judgment just as surely as He could heal sickness. The modern appetite for supernatural benefits frequently shows considerably less enthusiasm for the holiness accompanying God's presence. Everybody wants the healing line; considerably fewer volunteers are eager to

discuss the consequences of lying to the Holy Ghost. Acts records both, and the Bible believer has no authority to remove either.

The extraordinary character of these signs becomes unmistakable in Acts 5:15–16. Sick people were brought into the streets and laid upon beds and couches so that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. Multitudes also came from cities around Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those vexed with unclean spirits, “and they were healed every one.” That is the biblical statement. The text does not explicitly say that Peter's shadow possessed independent healing power, and it certainly does not establish shadows as objects of worship. It records the extraordinary expectation surrounding his ministry and the comprehensive healing that followed. Notice again the result: every one was healed among those brought in the described gathering. A ministry claiming comparable apostolic authority should not be surprised when somebody examines whether its claims resemble the actual record. A sign that cannot withstand examination is a poor credential for a man claiming to speak with Heaven's authority.

The response of the religious establishment also deserves attention. Acts 5:17 records the high priest and those associated with him being filled with indignation. Their opposition continued despite the remarkable works taking place among the people. Peter and the other apostles eventually declared, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). They were not defending a commercial healing enterprise. They were bearing witness to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Their miracles served that testimony. Acts 5:42 records that they continued daily in the temple and in every house, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. That is the proper relationship between signs and preaching. The signs confirmed the authority of the message; they never became a replacement for the message. The apostolic ministry was not established to furnish an endless parade of physical demonstrations while leaving men ignorant of sin, repentance, and salvation. A recovered body is a blessing, but a lost soul still needs the gospel.

4. Aeneas Restored and Dorcas Raised From the Dead

Acts 9:32–35 records Peter coming to Lydda, where he found a man named Aeneas who had kept his bed eight years and was sick of the palsy. Peter declared, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed.” The man arose immediately. Again the miracle was definite, public, and connected directly to the authority of Jesus Christ. Peter did not announce that he possessed independent power capable of healing whenever he pleased. He identified the risen Lord as the One making Aeneas whole. The result was evangelistic. Acts 9:35 declares that all who dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord. The significance of the healing extended beyond one man's recovery. God was using the miracle to confirm the testimony of His chosen witness and direct attention

toward Christ. The apostle did not need to persuade the neighbourhood that an unseen improvement had occurred. The bedridden man was standing before them.

The account then moves to Joppa, where a disciple named Tabitha, also called Dorcas, became sick and died. She was a woman full of good works and almsdeeds, and the widows showed Peter the garments she had made. This was no anonymous figure brought before an audience for a carefully arranged performance. Dorcas was known among the believers, and her death had produced genuine mourning. Peter put the people out of the room, knelt down, and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, arise.” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. Peter presented her alive, and Acts 9:42 declares that the event became known throughout Joppa, with many believing in the Lord. The resurrection was not an improvement in a symptom or a temporary emotional experience. A woman who had died was alive again. The testimony was extraordinary because the event itself was extraordinary.

Notice the manner in which the two miracles were performed. In the case of Aeneas, Peter announced that Jesus Christ made him whole and commanded him to rise. In the case of Dorcas, Peter first knelt and prayed before speaking to the body. Scripture records the differences without embarrassment because the authority belonged to God, not to a rigid human formula. There is no instruction here requiring every later Christian to visit a funeral home and command the dead to rise. Nor does the account suggest that prayer for the sick has become meaningless. It demonstrates what God accomplished through His apostle at a particular time. Dorcas eventually faced physical death again, as did other people restored during the apostolic period. Their temporary preservation pointed toward the greater authority of the risen Christ. A man can believe every word of these accounts without pretending that every Christian minister possesses Peter's extraordinary commission. The miracles are strengthened by respecting their context, not diminished by it.

5. Paul at Lystra and the Gentiles Who Tried to Worship the Messenger

Acts 14 records Paul and Barnabas ministering at Lystra, where a man sat impotent in his feet, crippled from his mother's womb, and unable ever to walk. The resemblance to the man healed at the Beautiful gate is striking. Peter's miracle occurred in Jerusalem during the earlier testimony to Israel; Paul's occurred in a Gentile setting during his missionary ministry. The same risen Christ was demonstrating His power through another chosen apostle. Paul perceived that the man had faith to be healed and commanded with a loud voice, “Stand upright on thy feet.” Acts 14:10 declares that the man leaped and walked. The historical parallels establish Paul's apostolic authority without making his ministry independent of Christ. The miracle did not require the man to develop muscles over time or

learn to walk after years of inactivity. The restoration was immediate. This was not merely a convincing sermon about healing. It was a healing that required no sermon to persuade the witnesses that something remarkable had occurred.

The response of the Gentile crowd illustrates how quickly fallen mankind can turn a genuine divine work into false worship. The people cried out that the gods had come down in the likeness of men. They called Barnabas Jupiter and Paul Mercurius, and the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands, intending to offer sacrifice. Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and rushed among the people, protesting that they were men of like passions with them. They urged the crowd to turn from vanities unto the living God who made heaven, earth, sea, and everything therein. Here is an astonishing contrast. The apostle performed a miracle, and the people immediately attempted to make him an object of worship. He did not accept their admiration as proof of a successful ministry. He rebuked their idolatry. Modern religious performers who cultivate extravagant personal devotion would do well to read that passage before accepting another public declaration of their supposedly supernatural greatness.

The instability of the crowd becomes even more revealing as the chapter continues. Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, persuaded the people, and Paul was stoned and dragged outside the city, being supposed dead. The same population that had nearly offered sacrifices to him was soon persuaded to participate in violence against him. That is human nature in an especially concentrated form. A crowd can mistake a servant for a god in the morning and treat him like refuse before evening. Religious excitement is not the same as saving faith. Genuine miracles do not automatically produce spiritual obedience, and public admiration offers no reliable measure of divine approval. Paul continued his missionary work, preaching the gospel and strengthening disciples through tribulation. The apostolic ministry involved suffering as well as supernatural power. Anyone advertising apostleship as a pathway to uninterrupted health, celebrity, and financial comfort has managed to overlook a considerable portion of Paul's actual experience.

6. Handkerchiefs, Aprons, and the Special Miracles at Ephesus

Acts 19:11 declares, “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.” That statement deserves careful attention because the Holy Ghost identifies both the source and the extraordinary nature of the works. God wrought them. Paul was the instrument. The miracles were special. Verse 12 explains that handkerchiefs or aprons brought from Paul's body to sick people were associated with the departure of diseases and evil spirits. The text does not say that pieces of cloth possessed independent supernatural power, nor does it authorize every preacher to establish a permanent business selling miracle fabrics. God chose to perform extraordinary works through His apostle in that historical setting. Paul's

ministry at Ephesus was accompanied by divine testimony while the Word of God spread through Asia. The miracles were not the main attraction of a profitable religious enterprise. They were part of God's confirmation of the apostolic message. A piece of cloth is still a piece of cloth until God acts.

The surrounding narrative provides an especially useful warning against treating divine authority as a religious technique. Certain vagabond Jews attempted to cast out evil spirits by invoking the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. They had witnessed the effects associated with the apostle's ministry and apparently imagined that repeating the proper words would produce comparable results. The evil spirit answered, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?” The possessed man then overcame them, and they fled wounded and naked. Their experience was hardly the outcome promised by religious performers who treat the name of Christ as a magical formula. The authority belonged to the Lord, and it could not be borrowed through imitation. The incident exposed the difference between genuine divine commission and human presumption. A man may repeat another person's words, imitate his gestures, and dress like a religious authority without possessing the authority he claims. Heaven is not deceived by a costume, and devils are not impressed by an unauthorized performance.

Acts 19:17–20 records the broader consequences of these events. Fear fell upon the people, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, believers confessed their deeds, and those who had practiced curious arts brought their books together and burned them publicly. The value of the destroyed books was considerable, but the people recognized that their former practices were incompatible with the truth they had received. The passage concludes that the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed. Notice where the narrative leads. Not toward a permanent market in consecrated handkerchiefs, but toward the magnification of Christ, confession of sin, rejection of occult practices, and triumph of the Word. It is a serious distortion to extract the aprons from Acts 19 while ignoring the repentance surrounding them. The same chapter that records extraordinary miracles also records an unmistakable rejection of spiritual manipulation. God performed special works through Paul, but no one was authorized to convert those works into a mechanical procedure for manufacturing miracles on demand.

7. Apostolic Credentials, the Transition of Acts, and the Sick Saints

Second Corinthians 12:12 provides the doctrinal explanation for the miracles recorded throughout Acts. Paul appealed to signs, wonders, and mighty deeds as evidence of his apostleship. That statement must be read alongside the historical qualifications associated with the apostolic office. Acts 1:21–22 establishes the requirement for the replacement of Judas to be a witness of Christ's resurrection who had accompanied the

disciples during the Lord's earthly ministry. Paul occupied an extraordinary position because the risen Christ personally appeared to him and appointed him to his ministry, as Acts 9 and 1 Corinthians 15 demonstrate. Apostles were not simply energetic preachers who enjoyed successful meetings. They were commissioned witnesses through whom God established authoritative testimony concerning His Son. Ephesians 2:20 describes the household of God as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. A foundation is laid to support a building; it is not continuously relaid whenever somebody desires a new title.

The transitional nature of Acts explains why miraculous signs feature prominently while the gospel moves outward from Jerusalem. Peter's ministry occupies the foreground in the earlier chapters, while Paul's Gentile mission becomes central as the narrative progresses. Yet that transition must not be exaggerated into the claim that one apostle preached an entirely different Saviour from another. Peter and Paul proclaimed the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and Acts 15 records their agreement concerning salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The distinctions concern historical audience, developing revelation, apostolic assignments, and the administration of God's purposes. During this foundational period, extraordinary signs accompanied chosen messengers and others through whom God worked, including Stephen and Philip. The existence of miraculous gifts among some believers does not mean that every Christian possessed them. First Corinthians 12 distinguishes the gifts distributed among the members of Christ's body and plainly asks, “have all the gifts of healing?” The answer is no. Divine distribution never meant universal possession.

The later Pauline record creates a difficulty that guaranteed-healing doctrine cannot honestly escape. Paul prayed three times concerning his thorn in the flesh, and the Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). First Timothy 5:23 records Paul's practical advice concerning Timothy's stomach and frequent infirmities. Philippians 2:27 declares that Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death, though God had mercy upon him. Second Timothy 4:20 records the plain statement, “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” These passages do not prove that God stopped healing or that the apostle possessed no further spiritual authority. They demonstrate that the presence of apostolic power did not guarantee the immediate removal of every sickness among God's servants. Paul did not command Trophimus to claim a promise and recover instantly. He left him sick. A doctrine that cannot survive the final chapters of Paul's ministry has no business claiming to represent the entire New Testament.

Conclusion

The healing miracles of Acts establish beyond dispute that the risen Lord Jesus Christ exercised extraordinary power through His chosen apostles. Peter commanded a man lame from birth to rise, and he walked. The sick gathered around the apostles, and the record says they were healed. Aeneas arose from eight years of confinement. Dorcas returned from death. Paul restored a cripple at Lystra, and God performed special miracles through him at Ephesus. These were not imaginary recoveries or religious legends manufactured to increase financial support. They were recorded manifestations of divine power accompanying the foundational preaching of Christ's resurrection and the spread of the gospel. The apostles did not possess independent deity, nor were they the authors of the power they exercised. God worked through them according to His purpose. Their miracles confirmed the message and authenticated the authority entrusted to them. A faithful reading of Acts honors those works without turning them into an indiscriminate promise that every modern religious personality may claim identical powers.

The distinction between divine healing and the possession of apostolic healing authority is essential. God has never surrendered His ability to restore a diseased body, answer earnest prayer, or intervene beyond human explanation. Christians should pray for the sick, seek appropriate treatment, care for suffering families, and thank the Lord when recovery occurs. But the ability of God to heal does not establish the authority of a particular man to command healing whenever he chooses. A religious title cannot bestow apostolic credentials. A crowded auditorium cannot reproduce Pentecost. An expensive broadcasting operation cannot manufacture the signs of an apostle. The sick deserve compassion rather than manipulation, and the Church deserves doctrine rather than theatrical claims. Nobody should be instructed to abandon necessary medical care because a preacher has announced a miracle that cannot be verified. Scripture does not require dishonesty in the name of faith. The believer's confidence rests in the living God, not in the reputation of the person standing nearest the microphone.

The final significance of the apostolic miracles is found in the Person they proclaimed. The lame walked because Jesus Christ was alive. The sick recovered because the risen Lord possessed authority over their infirmities. The dead were raised because the One who conquered death had power beyond the grave. The signs pointed toward Christ, and Christ remains greater than every sign performed in His name. The Church now possesses the completed written testimony concerning His death, burial, resurrection, and saving grace. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Salvation does not depend upon witnessing an apostolic miracle. It depends upon receiving the Lord Jesus Christ through faith in the gospel. The body still awaits its final redemption, and every temporary healing remains subject to the mortality of this present life. But the resurrection of Christ guarantees a victory that no sickness can eventually

overturn. The signs of an apostle authenticated the message of the risen Saviour; they were never intended to replace the message with an endless pursuit of supernatural spectacle. When the sign becomes more important than the Saviour, religion has missed the very truth the miracle was given to establish.

4 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – With His Stripes We Are Healed: What Isaiah 53 Actually Promises

Key Passage: Isaiah 53:4–6 (KJV)

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

There are few passages in the King James Bible more glorious, more necessary, or more shamefully mishandled than Isaiah 53. Here the Holy Ghost pulls back the curtain upon Calvary centuries before the Roman soldiers ever raised a hammer against the Son of God. Here the innocent Servant bears the guilt of the guilty, the righteous One suffers for the unrighteous, and the LORD lays upon His beloved Son the iniquity of wandering sinners. Yet amid this tremendous revelation of substitutionary atonement, religious men have managed to extract five words, “with his stripes we are healed,” and build an entire system of guaranteed physical healing upon them. The trouble is not that these men believe God can heal. The trouble is that they promise something God has not promised, then accuse suffering Christians of unbelief when their promises fail. A verse about the suffering Saviour becomes a weapon against the suffering saint. That is not faithfulness to Scripture. That is a dreadful misuse of it.

The controversy does not concern whether physical healing belongs within the ultimate accomplishments of Christ's redemption. Of course the finished work of Jesus Christ secures the final deliverance of the redeemed body from corruption, weakness, disease, and death. A man who has read Romans 8, First Corinthians 15, and Philippians 3 should have no difficulty understanding that glorious truth. The question concerns when that deliverance becomes the believer's actual bodily experience. Does Calvary guarantee that a Christian can immediately claim perfect health whenever sickness appears, or does Scripture distinguish salvation already possessed from bodily redemption still awaiting fulfillment? That distinction is where the argument must be settled. Some religious

teachers reason that because Christ bore our sicknesses, every believer must now possess an unconditional right to physical restoration. It sounds impressive until somebody opens the rest of the Bible. Then Paul appears with his infirmities, Timothy with his frequent ailments, Epaphroditus near death, and Trophimus left sick. Evidently, somebody forgot to inform the apostles of the modern formula.

Isaiah 53 must be read as a complete revelation of the suffering Servant, not as a collection of isolated expressions available for religious advertising. The chapter concerns rejection, humiliation, substitution, transgression, iniquity, sacrifice, justification, death, burial, and eventual triumph. Matthew 8 applies part of Isaiah's language to the Lord's actual healing ministry before Calvary, while First Peter 2 applies the language of His stripes directly to sins borne upon the tree. Romans 8 then explains why Christians who possess the Spirit of God continue groaning within mortal bodies as they await their final redemption. These passages belong together, but they must not be flattened into a single promise of immediate physical health. God does not contradict Himself between Isaiah, Matthew, Peter, and Paul. The contradiction arises when men insist that one selected phrase must override everything else the Lord has said. Scripture is not improved by cutting out the verses that disturb a cherished doctrine.

1. The Suffering Servant and the Context Men Keep Ignoring

The prophecy begins before the chapter division. Isaiah 52:13 declares, “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” The following verses describe astonishing humiliation and the eventual recognition of the Servant among the nations. The prophecy therefore embraces both suffering and exaltation. Isaiah 53:1 then asks, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” These are not the words of a medical advertisement. They introduce the rejection of the Messiah whose appearance and ministry would contradict the expectations of those who looked for earthly splendour without suffering. The chapter proceeds to describe a Man growing up as a tender plant and a root out of dry ground, possessing no outward beauty that would attract the admiration of worldly men. Israel's Messiah would first appear in humility, not seated upon David's throne dispensing every promised kingdom blessing. The crown was certain, but the cross stood before it.

Isaiah 53:3 identifies Him as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” despised and rejected of men. The description is fulfilled in the earthly ministry and suffering of Jesus Christ. John 1:11 declares, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The rulers rejected Him, the multitude eventually demanded His crucifixion, and His disciples scattered when the hour of suffering arrived. The nation that possessed the promises concerning Messiah failed to recognize the promised One standing before them. Yet His

rejection was not an accident that defeated God's purposes. Acts 2:23 declares that He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The rejected Servant would accomplish redemption through the very suffering His enemies inflicted. No earthly physician could have diagnosed the condition of mankind as completely as Isaiah did. The disease beneath every other disease was sin, and the remedy would require the innocent Son of God to bear what guilty men deserved.

The opening statements establish the meaning of the verses that follow. Isaiah 53:4 speaks of griefs and sorrows, but verse 5 immediately identifies transgressions and iniquities. Verse 6 describes sheep wandering from their proper way and declares that the LORD laid their iniquity upon His Servant. Verse 10 identifies His soul as an offering for sin, while verse 11 connects His suffering with the justification of many. Verse 12 declares that He bore the sin of many and made intercession for transgressors. That is the controlling subject of the passage. Physical suffering is unquestionably present in the Servant's experience, and His saving work reaches ultimately to the redemption of the body. Nevertheless, Isaiah is not primarily describing the removal of arthritis, blindness, fever, or bodily injury. He is revealing the sacrifice through which guilty sinners can be reconciled to a holy God. A man who reads the entire chapter and finds nothing but a guarantee of immediate physical healing has walked through a treasury of redemption and stopped to admire the doorknob.

2. Wounded for Transgressions and Bruised for Iniquities

Isaiah 53:5 begins, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” The word “for” is essential because it explains the purpose of the Servant's suffering. He was not suffering for transgressions He had committed. He was suffering for the transgressions of others. First Peter 2:22 declares that He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Second Corinthians 5:21 says that God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Here is substitution. The sinner deserves judgment, but the sinless Saviour bears the penalty. The guilty man possesses nothing with which to purchase his own acquittal, yet Christ provides the sacrifice. The Lord Jesus Christ was not merely setting an example of courage under suffering. He was bearing sin. Remove substitution from Isaiah 53, and the chapter loses the very truth that makes Calvary necessary.

The next expression declares, “the chastisement of our peace was upon him.” Peace with God does not arise because a sinner becomes emotionally settled, improves his habits, or learns to speak positively about himself. Romans 5:1 declares, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That peace rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not the changing performance of the saved. Colossians 1:20

speaks of peace made through the blood of His cross. The chastisement fell upon Christ so that those who believe upon Him might be reconciled to God. There is nothing uncertain about the transaction. The cross did not make salvation merely possible for sufficiently determined religious people. Christ accomplished the sacrifice necessary for redemption, and God receives the believing sinner through His Son. A man may enjoy excellent health and remain an enemy of God, while another may lie dying in a hospital bed and possess everlasting peace through Jesus Christ.

Then comes the declaration that has generated so much controversy: “and with his stripes we are healed.” The word “healed” must be understood in connection with what immediately precedes and follows it. Christ was wounded for transgressions, bruised for iniquities, and chastised for peace. The next verse describes human rebellion and the transfer of iniquity to the suffering Servant. The healing Isaiah emphasizes concerns the desperate condition produced by sin and the restoration accomplished through the Messiah's substitutionary suffering. This does not deny the bodily consequences of redemption. It establishes the immediate doctrinal subject of the prophecy. Isaiah is explaining why Christ suffered and what His sacrifice accomplishes for guilty sinners. A modern preacher who declares that every sick Christian must already be physically healed has shifted the subject from the sinner's reconciliation to God to the present condition of his body. The words remain biblical, but the interpretation has wandered away from their setting.

3. The Iniquity of Us All Laid Upon One Innocent Substitute

Isaiah 53:6 supplies the explanation that no honest exposition can afford to overlook: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The problem is universal rebellion. Men have not merely suffered unfortunate circumstances. They have turned from God, rejected His authority, and followed their own ways. Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The sinner cannot cure himself of guilt by religious activity any more than a sheep can cleanse its own filthy wool merely by wishing to become clean. Someone else must perform the necessary work. Isaiah reveals that the LORD Himself laid the iniquity upon His Servant. This was not a sinner transferring blame to another sinner. It was God providing the righteous Substitute through whom sin could be judged and forgiveness secured.

The following verses describe the Servant oppressed and afflicted, yet opening not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, cut off from the land of the living, and associated with the wicked in His death, though He had done no violence. Isaiah 53:10 declares, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt

make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." The language is sacrificial and redemptive. The Servant dies, yet the prophecy anticipates His continued life and triumph. The suffering was not meaningless cruelty inflicted upon a helpless victim. It formed part of God's appointed purpose to redeem sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life, and He possessed authority to take it again, as John 10:17–18 declares. His sacrifice accomplished what every animal offering under the law could only anticipate.

Isaiah 53:11 brings the matter to its doctrinal conclusion: "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Justification is the issue, and the bearing of iniquities is the means. Verse 12 again identifies the Servant as the One who "bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Read those statements carefully. The chapter does not conclude by announcing that every physical infirmity will disappear the moment a sinner believes. It concludes with the triumphant work of the sin-bearing Servant. The prophecy was delivered through Isaiah concerning Israel's rejected Messiah, but the saving benefits of Christ's sacrifice reach believing Gentiles as well. Acts 8 records Philip preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch from this very prophecy. The suffering Servant is not the private possession of one nation. He is the Saviour through whom God grants redemption. But the enlargement of salvation's reach does not authorize changing the timing of every blessing secured by that redemption.

4. Matthew Eight: Physical Healing Before the Cross

Matthew 8:16–17 must now be examined because it is frequently brought forward as the decisive argument for guaranteed physical healing through the atonement. The passage declares that when evening came, many possessed with devils were brought to Jesus, and He cast out the spirits with His word and healed all who were sick. Matthew then explains, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." There is no escaping the physical nature of the miracles. Christ actually healed diseases and bodily afflictions. The inspired writer deliberately connects those works with Isaiah's prophecy. Anyone who attempts to explain the sicknesses in Matthew 8 as merely spiritual problems has refused the plain wording of the passage. The Lord was demonstrating His authority over genuine physical suffering, and the Holy Ghost identified His works as fulfilling what Isaiah had spoken.

But notice something that causes considerable difficulty for the claim that Matthew 8 proves immediate healing through the completed atonement. The events of Matthew 8 occurred before Jesus Christ was crucified. He had not yet been scourged by the Roman soldiers. His hands had not been nailed to the cross. His blood had not yet been shed at Calvary. Nevertheless, Matthew identifies His healing ministry as a fulfillment of Isaiah's

statement concerning infirmities and sicknesses. The timing is not a minor inconvenience that can be ignored. If the passage is being used to establish that every Christian must receive immediate physical healing because Christ has already borne his sicknesses at Calvary, the interpreter must explain why Matthew applied the prophecy to miraculous healings performed before Calvary occurred. The answer lies in recognizing that Christ's earthly ministry revealed His identity and demonstrated His authority while His approaching sacrifice would secure the full accomplishments of redemption.

Matthew does not teach that Isaiah's prophecy was exhausted by the healing ministry recorded in chapter 8. Neither does he establish that every individual who later believes upon Christ must experience an identical physical miracle. The Gospel writer demonstrates that Jesus fulfilled the prophetic expectations surrounding the promised Messiah. He possessed authority over sickness and devils, and His miracles furnished visible evidence that the King had come to Israel. Isaiah 35 had foretold the opening of blind eyes and unstopping of deaf ears, while Matthew 11 records Jesus directing John the Baptist to those very works as testimony to His identity. The healing ministry was genuine, prophetic, and extraordinary. But a historical fulfillment demonstrating Christ's authority is not automatically an unrestricted command requiring Him to reproduce every miracle for every believer throughout the Church Age. The Lord never lost His power. The religious error begins when men confuse a demonstration of that power with an unconditional promise concerning its exercise.

5. Peter Explains the Stripes and Identifies the Healing

First Peter 2:24 provides the clearest New Testament explanation of the expression under consideration: “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” Peter does not leave the subject uncertain. Christ bore our sins. He bore them in His own body on the tree. The intended result includes believers becoming dead to sins and living unto righteousness. Then Peter declares that by His stripes they were healed. The verse is not discussing an apostolic healing service or commanding sick Christians to deny their symptoms. It concerns the saving work of Christ and its consequences for the believer's relationship to sin. The apostle takes Isaiah's language and applies it directly to redemption from sin. A man determined to make physical health the controlling subject must step over Peter's own explanation to reach his conclusion.

The following verse makes the meaning still clearer: “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” That statement corresponds directly to Isaiah 53:6, where wandering sheep represent sinners turning to their own ways. Peter's argument moves from Christ bearing sins to believers living unto

righteousness, and then to wandering sheep returning to their Shepherd. The passage concerns spiritual restoration through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It does not say that believers have been made permanently immune to disease, that physical aging has ceased, or that every injury will disappear if sufficient faith is exercised. In fact, the broader chapter addresses Christians enduring unjust suffering while following the example of Christ. Peter does not promise them exemption from bodily pain. He directs them to the suffering Saviour and the righteous purpose of their conduct. It takes a remarkable amount of selective reading to find guaranteed physical comfort in a passage teaching believers how to endure suffering faithfully.

Matthew and Peter are not contradicting one another. Matthew records Christ physically healing people during His earthly ministry and connects those miracles with Isaiah's prophecy. Peter explains the sin-bearing sacrifice of Christ through the same prophetic language and identifies the restoration accomplished for wandering sinners. Isaiah reveals the suffering Servant whose work ultimately secures redemption in its fullness. The passages address connected truths from different points in the unfolding revelation. Christ demonstrated power over disease before Calvary, bore sins upon the cross, and guarantees the final redemption of those who belong to Him. The error is not believing too much of Isaiah 53. It is believing too little of the passages explaining Isaiah 53. The complete biblical testimony is greater than a temporary cure, and its promises must be received according to God's appointed order. The cross accomplished redemption; it did not authorize every preacher to rewrite the timetable of resurrection.

6. The Redemption of the Body and the Groaning of the Saved

Romans 8:18–25 delivers the decisive answer concerning the present condition of the Christian body. Paul begins by comparing the sufferings of this present time with the glory that shall be revealed in us. He then describes the creation itself waiting for deliverance from the bondage of corruption. The entire creation groans and travails in pain together, awaiting the glorious liberty of the children of God. These are not the complaints of unbelievers who lack sufficient confidence in divine promises. Paul includes Christians among those presently experiencing the effects of corruption. Romans 8:23 declares, “even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Notice the word “waiting.” The believer possesses salvation now, but the redemption of his body awaits a future event. If every physical consequence of corruption had already been removed from the saved, there would be nothing left for the body to await.

Paul continues, “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” The Christian's future bodily transformation is

certain, but it has not yet become his present experience. First Corinthians 15:42–44 describes the body sown in corruption and raised in incorruption, sown in dishonour and raised in glory, sown in weakness and raised in power. Verse 53 declares that the corruptible must put on incorruption and the mortal must put on immortality. Those promises concern the resurrection and transformation of the body. They are not descriptions of ordinary Christian health during the present age. The physical body remains mortal until God changes it. A saved man may possess excellent medical care and still die. Another may receive remarkable healing and later die from an entirely different condition. Temporary recovery does not abolish mortality. The full victory over corruption requires the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:26 supplies another fact that should silence careless teaching: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer, yet infirmities remain part of the Christian's present experience. The Spirit helps the saint in weakness rather than making all weakness impossible. Paul himself prayed three times concerning his thorn in the flesh and received the answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Timothy experienced frequent infirmities. Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death. Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. These men were not strangers to the gospel or ignorant of apostolic power. They were faithful servants of Jesus Christ. A doctrine insisting that every Christian must already be physically healed cannot survive these passages without explaining away the plain meaning of the words. The Bible does not need correcting because a healing theory has encountered an inconvenient apostle.

7. Sealed Until Redemption and the Promise No Disease Can Defeat

Ephesians 1:13–14 establishes another essential distinction. After hearing the word of truth and believing the gospel of salvation, Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” The believer has already received the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit is described as the earnest of an inheritance awaiting its full realization. The word “until” identifies something future. The purchased possession belongs to the Lord, yet its complete redemption remains ahead. First Corinthians 6:19–20 declares that Christians are bought with a price and must glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are God's. The body belongs to Christ by purchase, but ownership does not mean that its future transformation has already occurred. A house may belong to its rightful owner while awaiting the completion of restoration. The certainty of the purchase establishes the owner's claim; it does not erase the work still appointed for completion.

Ephesians 4:30 likewise declares that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit “unto the day of redemption.” Philippians 3:20–21 identifies the promised bodily transformation: the Lord Jesus Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” That transformation is future. It belongs to the believer's blessed hope and the coming of Christ for His Church. First Thessalonians 4:16–17 describes the dead in Christ rising first and living believers being caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. First Corinthians 15:51–52 declares that believers shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Here is the actual fulfillment of permanent bodily redemption. When that change occurs, corruption will yield to incorruption, and mortality will give way to immortality. The body purchased through Christ's sacrifice will be transformed by His power. No illness will survive that transformation, and no medical treatment will ever be required to improve it.

Until that appointed day, Christians are commanded to walk by faith rather than sight, to pray according to God's will, and to trust His wisdom in circumstances they cannot control. First John 5:14 declares that confidence in prayer concerns asking according to His will. That is not unbelief. It is submission to the authority of the One who knows the end from the beginning. A believer may ask God to remove disease, pursue competent medical treatment, and thank Him for every genuine improvement without pretending that the resurrection has already occurred. The sick person does not need another preacher demanding that he demonstrate faith by denying an obvious physical condition. He needs the truth of Scripture, earnest prayer, practical assistance, and compassion that does not depend upon an immediate miracle. A promise of bodily resurrection is infinitely stronger than a preacher's guarantee of tomorrow's recovery. The resurrection promise rests upon the finished work and unchanging faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Isaiah 53 does not diminish the power of God to heal the body, and neither should any faithful exposition of the chapter. The Lord Jesus Christ genuinely healed the sick during His earthly ministry. Matthew identified those miracles with the prophetic words concerning infirmities and sicknesses. Peter identified the sin-bearing sacrifice of Calvary as the source of the believer's restoration from sin. Paul revealed that the redeemed still await the redemption of their bodies. These truths are not competitors. They belong to the same glorious work of Jesus Christ, understood in its proper order. The suffering Servant bore iniquity, secured reconciliation, conquered death, and purchased the complete redemption of those who trust Him. The immediate possession of eternal salvation and the future transformation of the body must be distinguished without separating them from the

one finished sacrifice. The cross did not fail because a Christian still becomes sick. The cross succeeded, and the resurrection will demonstrate the full extent of that victory.

The claim that sufficient faith must immediately remove every physical infirmity places a burden upon suffering Christians that Scripture itself does not impose. It turns the promise of redemption into a test of religious performance and frequently leaves the sick person carrying the blame for a healing that never occurred. That is not what Isaiah preached, what Matthew recorded, what Peter explained, or what Paul taught. God's power remains unlimited, and Christians should pray earnestly for His healing mercy. But no individual possesses the right to announce an unconditional result where God has not given an unconditional promise. A preacher who insists that every redeemed body must already be free from disease has confused the earnest of the inheritance with the completed inheritance itself. He has taken the future glory of resurrection and attempted to make it a present requirement. When Scripture exposes that error, the proper response is to correct the doctrine rather than condemn the suffering saint. God's Word is not accountable to a man's religious system. The system is accountable to God's Word.

The final promise is greater than any temporary recovery the present world can offer. The Lord Jesus Christ did not suffer merely to provide a few additional years in a body that must eventually return to the dust. He endured the cross, bore the sins of the guilty, and rose from the dead so that those who belong to Him might receive everlasting life and final victory over corruption. Every healed person in the Gospel accounts eventually faced death again. Every apostle who performed miracles eventually left this world. But Jesus Christ rose never to die again, and His resurrection establishes the certainty of the believer's future transformation. The saved may groan today, but they shall not groan forever. The body may weaken now, but it shall not remain weak. Disease may continue during this present life, but it has no claim upon the glorified body. Isaiah's declaration stands in all its glory: “with his stripes we are healed.” The healing of sin is secured through His sacrifice, and the redemption of the body will be completed through His resurrection power. The cross purchased the victory, the empty tomb declared it, and the coming of Christ will bring its bodily fulfillment. **Do not reduce that everlasting triumph to a temporary promise that God never made.**

5 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – Is Any Sick Among You? The Prayer of Faith and James Chapter Five

Key Passage: James 5:14–16 (KJV)

“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.”

There is something downright remarkable about a religious generation that can turn a passage concerning prayer into a formula for commanding Almighty God. James asks a simple question: “Is any sick among you?” He then gives instructions involving the elders of the church, prayer, anointing with oil, faith, and the Lord's power to raise up the sick. There is not a syllable in the passage about purchasing a miracle, mailing an offering to a healing ministry, or proving faith by pretending that a disease has disappeared when it has not. Neither does James instruct the afflicted believer to remain silent about his condition because acknowledging pain supposedly constitutes unbelief. The sick man is instructed to admit that he is sick and call for help. That alone ought to straighten out a considerable amount of modern religious foolishness. The Bible begins with reality, not make-believe. Genuine faith does not require a man to lie about his condition before he can ask God to change it. Faith brings the need before the Lord and recognizes who possesses the authority to meet it.

The passage is equally troublesome for those who have concluded that divine healing belongs exclusively to ancient history and that Christians have no business praying for physical restoration today. James plainly directs the sick to seek prayer, and he plainly connects that prayer with the Lord raising up the afflicted. The Scriptures do not present God as a retired physician who performed extraordinary works centuries ago and subsequently closed His office. He remains the living God. His power has not weakened, His mercy has not expired, and His ability to restore the human body has not diminished. But recognizing divine power is not the same as claiming personal authority to dictate how and when that power must operate. The Lord who healed Hezekiah also permitted Job to suffer. The Christ who healed multitudes also told Paul that His grace would be sufficient while the thorn remained. The question is not whether God can heal. The question is whether every statement concerning healing may be detached from its audience, setting, conditions, and relationship to the rest of Scripture.

James 5 must therefore be examined with the Bible open and the religious advertising set aside. Who received this epistle? What does James actually command? What is the relationship between the elders, the oil, and the prayer? What does the expression “prayer of faith” mean in its immediate context? Why does James say, “if he have committed sins,” rather than declaring that all sickness results from personal transgression? Why does he

introduce Elijah, whose prayers concerned the withholding and restoration of rain? And how does this passage agree with the testimony of Paul, who prayed earnestly for relief and received an answer that did not remove his affliction? These are not questions raised to escape the promises of God. They are necessary questions for understanding what God has promised. A man who fears the context of a verse generally has more confidence in his doctrine than in the Book. The Lord never instructed His people to protect a favourite teaching from examination.

1. To the Twelve Tribes: The Audience James Actually Addressed

James 1:1 identifies the writer and his intended recipients: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.” There is the address, printed plainly at the beginning of the epistle. James was not writing an anonymous religious letter to an undefined audience. He explicitly addressed the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Those are Israelite tribes, not twelve modern denominations, twelve spiritual temperaments, or twelve convenient subdivisions of the Church. The historical setting belongs to the early period of New Testament Christianity, when believing Jews continued to experience persecution, dispersion, and the profound transition accompanying the death and resurrection of their Messiah. James 2:2 refers to an assembly, while James 5 speaks of elders of the church. These details must be examined together. The epistle contains instruction of lasting spiritual value, but its explicitly Jewish address cannot be erased merely because an interpreter wishes to claim one particular promise without qualification.

The proper distinction does not mean that Christians should discard James or treat its commands as meaningless. Second Timothy 3:16 declares that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Romans 15:4 likewise establishes the value of things written aforetime for our learning. James contains tremendous instruction concerning temptation, the tongue, pride, partiality, practical obedience, patience, and prayer. A Christian can learn from every chapter without pretending that James never addressed the twelve tribes. The danger appears when men confuse spiritual application with direct doctrinal assignment. Israel's covenant promises cannot simply be transferred to the Body of Christ, nor can the Pauline revelation concerning salvation by grace be replaced with a careless mixture of passages from different settings. A workman who rightly divides the Word does not throw away the portions addressed to others. He understands their setting before applying their lessons.

The fifth chapter itself supplies further evidence that the context matters. James rebukes wealthy oppressors, warns of approaching judgment, speaks of the coming of the Lord drawing nigh, and instructs believers to exercise patience like the husbandman waiting for

the precious fruit of the earth. He mentions the early and latter rain, the prophets who suffered affliction, and the patience of Job. These expressions belong to a rich biblical setting involving Israel, prophecy, suffering, and divine intervention. They also furnish instruction concerning Christian endurance and dependence upon God. But nobody should extract verses 14 and 15 as though they were written on an isolated sheet of paper with everything else removed. The healing instruction stands within an epistle that repeatedly calls God's people to patience under conditions they cannot immediately change. That is important. The same chapter that encourages prayer for the sick also commands patience in suffering. Evidently, James understood that faith and endurance could occupy the same Christian life without contradicting each other.

2. Is Any Sick Among You? The Elders, the Oil, and the Name of the Lord

James begins the immediate discussion in verse 13 by asking, “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.” The instruction addresses different circumstances without confusing them. Affliction calls for prayer, while gladness provides occasion for praise. Then comes the question concerning physical sickness. The word “sick” must be permitted to mean what it says. The passage concerns an afflicted person calling for the elders, receiving prayer, and seeking restoration. There is no reason to explain the sickness away as merely a lack of spiritual enthusiasm. The man is sick enough to require attention, and James directs him toward the spiritual leadership of the congregation. Notice also that the sick person initiates the request. He is not ordered to attend a travelling exhibition or present himself before a religious celebrity. He calls for the elders of the church. The emphasis is upon prayerful ministry within the believing assembly, not upon a commercial enterprise built around public demonstrations of supposed supernatural power.

The elders are instructed to pray over the sick person, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. Anointing with oil appears elsewhere in Scripture. Mark 6:13 records the disciples anointing many sick people with oil and healing them during their earthly ministry under Christ's commission. Luke 10:34 describes the Samaritan applying oil and wine to the wounds of an injured traveller. Those passages demonstrate that oil could accompany both religious ministry and practical physical care, though James specifically connects its use with prayer in the Lord's name. Nothing in the text identifies the oil as possessing independent supernatural power. The substance is not the Saviour. The elders are not the source of healing. The ceremony is not an instrument for compelling Heaven. The entire action is performed in the name of the Lord, directing attention toward the One whose authority matters. If oil possessed automatic healing power, a bottle would accomplish what the Bible assigns to divine intervention. James gives no such teaching.

There is also a necessary lesson concerning the responsibility of church leadership. Elders are not merely men who occupy prominent chairs, exercise authority in meetings, or enjoy the recognition associated with their position. First Peter 5:2 instructs elders to feed the flock of God and take the oversight willingly, not for filthy lucre. James presents them ministering to a suffering member of the congregation. The sick person is not an inconvenience interrupting more important religious business. He is someone needing prayer and attention. A faithful pastor should not require a suffering family to purchase his concern, nor should he use a hospital visit as an opportunity to collect financial support. The Lord's servants are to care for His sheep. Prayer may accompany appropriate medical treatment, practical assistance, and ordinary acts of mercy. There is nothing especially spiritual about praying over a sick man while refusing to help him obtain necessities within one's ability to provide. Genuine ministry puts compassion into action without pretending that compassion itself possesses miraculous power.

3. The Prayer of Faith Shall Save the Sick

James 5:15 declares, “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.” Those are strong words, and they must not be weakened merely because some religious teachers have abused them. James speaks positively about prayer and the Lord's power to restore the afflicted. In this setting, the expression “save the sick” concerns deliverance from the sickness under discussion. The following declaration that the Lord shall raise him up confirms the physical restoration in view. The word “save” can describe different kinds of deliverance according to its context, and nobody should automatically force every occurrence into the narrow meaning of eternal salvation. Peter cried, “Lord, save me,” when he was sinking in Matthew 14:30. He was asking to be rescued from drowning. Likewise, James is addressing sickness and the Lord's intervention. The passage means something definite, and an honest interpreter must allow it to retain its force.

But observe carefully who performs the decisive action. James does not say that the elders shall heal the sick man through their personal authority. He does not say that the oil shall cure him. He does not even present faith as an independent supernatural substance that accomplishes whatever its possessor desires. He says, “the Lord shall raise him up.” The prayer is offered in faith, but the healing belongs to the Lord. That distinction protects the sovereignty of God while preserving confidence in His power. A man may possess a strong conviction that God is able to heal without possessing a divine revelation that a particular sickness must disappear that afternoon. Faith is not the ability to manufacture certainty about something God has not revealed. Romans 10:17 declares that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Genuine faith rests upon divine testimony, not upon the intensity of a preacher's announcement.

The certainty expressed in James must be understood within the particular instruction rather than converted into an unlimited rule governing every request for physical healing. The passage describes the prayer of faith and the Lord's promised response in the circumstances James addresses. It does not establish that every prayer uttered by every believer must produce the exact result requested, regardless of God's will or other scriptural instruction. First John 5:14–15 explicitly connects confidence in answered prayer with asking according to His will. Paul prayed three times for his thorn to depart and received a different answer. Those passages cannot be discarded because they complicate an attractive formula. When Scripture records a definite promise, faith believes it. When Scripture reveals conditions, faith respects them. When God has not disclosed the outcome of a particular sickness, faith does not invent a revelation and demand that the afflicted person accept it. The Lord is faithful to every promise He has made, but He is not obligated to fulfil promises manufactured by men.

4. If He Have Committed Sins: Confession, Forgiveness, and False Accusations

The latter portion of James 5:15 declares, “and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” One small word carries considerable doctrinal weight: “if.” James does not say that the sick man necessarily committed particular sins that caused his sickness. He introduces the possibility conditionally. This immediately destroys the reckless claim that every physical affliction must result from personal rebellion. Certainly, Scripture records circumstances in which sickness and judgment are connected. First Corinthians 11:30 declares that many among the Corinthians were weak and sickly and that many slept because of their abuse of the Lord's supper. Numbers 12 records Miriam being afflicted with leprosy following her rebellion. But other passages demonstrate that sickness may arise without the particular guilt religious accusers imagine. John 9 records Christ rejecting the disciples' proposed explanation for a man's congenital blindness. The book of Job exposes the error of condemning an afflicted man without possessing divine knowledge of his circumstances.

James 5:16 continues, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” The instruction concerns honesty, humility, mutual responsibility, and prayer among believers. It does not establish a religious system requiring Christians to confess every private sin to a human priest who claims authority to absolve them. First John 1:9 directs believers to confess their sins and identifies God as faithful and just to forgive and cleanse. James speaks of faults being acknowledged among believers and prayer being offered for one another. When a Christian has wronged another person, humility requires that the wrong be addressed. When sin has damaged fellowship, confession and correction are proper. But the verse does not authorize indiscriminate

public exposure of private matters, nor does it require a sick person to invent hidden sins merely to satisfy someone demanding an explanation. Confession is not a religious performance designed to purchase healing. It is an act of truthfulness before God and those genuinely involved.

There is a considerable difference between encouraging honest self-examination and conducting a spiritual interrogation of somebody who is suffering. A pastor may ask whether a believer needs counsel, prayer, or assistance in correcting something known to be wrong. He has no authority to announce that a woman's illness proves secret rebellion or that a child's disability reveals parental unbelief. Those accusations require knowledge the preacher does not possess. Job's friends delivered lengthy explanations concerning his suffering, but God ultimately rebuked their handling of the matter. Their speeches sounded religious, yet their conclusions were mistaken. A sick person should not be forced to defend his spiritual standing before every self-appointed investigator carrying a Bible. If God reveals a particular sin through His Word and the conscience is convicted, the proper response is confession and repentance. If no such matter has been established, the church should pray and minister rather than invent charges. Religious suspicion is not a gift of discernment simply because it has learned to quote a verse.

5. Have Faith in God: Prayer According to His Will

Mark 11:22–24 contains another passage frequently brought into the healing controversy. Jesus begins with the command, “Have faith in God.” He then speaks of a mountain being removed and cast into the sea and declares the importance of believing when praying. The words are powerful, but the opening command must govern their interpretation. Faith is directed toward God, not toward the supposed creative power of human speech. The setting follows Christ's judgment upon the fig tree, an incident carrying solemn significance in His dealings with Israel. The Lord was instructing His disciples concerning faith in the power of God, not teaching that every believer may announce whatever earthly outcome he desires and thereby bring it into existence. The difference is enormous. One trusts the Almighty. The other attempts to occupy His position. A man who imagines that faith means issuing orders to Heaven has confused the servant with the Master before the prayer has even begun.

The following verse in Mark 11 also deserves attention. Jesus immediately instructs His disciples concerning forgiveness when standing in prayer. The passage cannot honestly be reduced to an unrestricted technique for obtaining material benefits while ignoring the spiritual responsibilities surrounding it. Nor should Mark 11 be separated from the Lord's own example in Gethsemane. In Mark 14:36, Jesus prayed, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou

wilt." There is recognition of divine power, a genuine request, and perfect submission to the Father's will. The sinless Son did not teach His disciples that acknowledging the Father's will constituted unbelief. He demonstrated obedience under circumstances involving suffering beyond ordinary human comprehension. If submission to God's will belonged in the prayer of Jesus Christ, it certainly belongs in the prayers of His servants. The believer need not choose between confidence in God's power and submission to His authority.

First John 5:14 states the governing principle plainly: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." Verse 15 continues by affirming confidence concerning petitions heard by Him. Notice that the assurance is not grounded in human intensity, emotional excitement, repeated declarations, or the number of people gathered around a hospital bed. It rests upon asking according to God's will. The Christian may confidently request healing, and there is nothing weak or dishonourable about doing so. But confidence in prayer must never be separated from confidence in the wisdom of the One receiving the request. God is not a reluctant clerk behind a heavenly counter who must surrender the requested blessing when somebody presents the correct paperwork. He is the sovereign LORD. Prayer is the privilege of approaching Him through Jesus Christ, not a method for transferring His authority into human hands.

6. Elijah Prayed Earnestly, and Heaven Answered

James 5:16 concludes with the tremendous declaration, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James then introduces Elijah as an example, declaring that he "was a man subject to like passions as we are." That statement removes any excuse for treating the prophet as a supernatural creature beyond ordinary human weakness. Elijah was a man. He experienced fear, exhaustion, opposition, discouragement, and the limitations belonging to human nature. Yet he prayed earnestly, and God answered. James records that Elijah prayed that it might not rain, and rain was withheld for three years and six months. He prayed again, and Heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. The lesson is not that Elijah possessed personal authority over the weather. The lesson is that the living God heard the prayers of His servant and acted with extraordinary power. The prophet was the petitioner, not the manufacturer of rain.

First Kings 17:1 records Elijah declaring before Ahab that there would be neither dew nor rain except according to his word. First Kings 18:1 then records the LORD telling Elijah to show himself to Ahab because He would send rain upon the earth. There is the divine purpose behind the prophet's ministry. Elijah was not conducting an experiment to discover whether sufficient emotional intensity could alter weather patterns. He was acting in connection with God's revealed dealings with rebellious Israel. The drought exposed the

helplessness of Baal worship and brought the nation face to face with the authority of the LORD. At Mount Carmel, Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal, and God answered by fire. The later prayer for rain belonged to that same historical setting. A man who reads Elijah's experience and concludes that he can command hurricanes to change course whenever he chooses has missed the prophet's relationship to God's revealed purpose. Elijah prayed in faith because he trusted the God who had spoken.

The account in First Kings 18 also demonstrates persistence. Elijah bowed himself upon the earth, and his servant repeatedly looked toward the sea before reporting a little cloud like a man's hand. The rain did not arrive because Elijah had discovered a secret procedure unknown to the rest of mankind. God had declared His intention, and the prophet continued praying in dependence upon Him. James uses the example to encourage earnest prayer among God's people. The righteous man's prayer avails much because the Lord hears and acts, not because the petitioner has become independent of divine authority. Christians should therefore pray seriously rather than treating prayer as a ceremonial introduction to practical affairs. They should seek the Lord concerning sickness, danger, family burdens, spiritual needs, and the work of the gospel. But earnestness must be joined to submission. Elijah's example should increase confidence in God, not inspire the ridiculous ambition to replace Him.

7. Paul's Thorn and the Answer That Did Not Remove It

Second Corinthians 12:7–10 presents a decisive comparison with James 5. Paul testified that a thorn in the flesh had been given him, described as a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. The affliction was real, grievous, and sufficient to drive the apostle repeatedly to prayer. He declared, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” Here was no inexperienced believer struggling to understand the fundamentals of Christianity. Paul had seen the risen Christ, received extraordinary revelations, preached the gospel among the Gentiles, and performed the signs of an apostle. The exact nature of his thorn is not explicitly identified, although his references to infirmities and the bodily weakness recorded elsewhere make physical suffering an important part of the discussion. Whatever its precise form, Paul wanted relief and asked the Lord for it. His prayer was earnest, repeated, and directed toward the proper authority.

The Lord answered, but not by removing the thorn. Second Corinthians 12:9 records the response: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That answer should settle the claim that every properly offered Christian prayer must produce immediate physical deliverance. Paul was not condemned for asking. He was not instructed to manufacture more confidence or repeat a prescribed confession until the

affliction disappeared. The Lord revealed that sufficient grace would accompany the continued weakness. Paul consequently declared that he would glory in his infirmities so that the power of Christ might rest upon him. That is a difficult truth for human pride because it permits God to receive glory through a servant who remains weak. Religious performers prefer a ministry in which every testimony ends with instant triumph. The apostle's testimony sometimes ended with the affliction still present and Christ still sufficient. That is not defeat. It is divine strength manifested where human strength fails.

The remaining Pauline record reinforces the distinction. First Timothy 5:23 contains practical instruction concerning Timothy's stomach and frequent infirmities. Philippians 2:27 records that Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death, although God had mercy upon him. Second Timothy 4:20 states, “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” These are not descriptions of strangers ignorant of the gospel. They concern faithful servants associated with apostolic ministry. The same Paul who performed special miracles through handkerchiefs and aprons did not claim that every sickness surrounding him must immediately disappear. Scripture records divine healing and continuing infirmity without contradiction. The contradiction exists only in the modern system insisting that one excludes the other. James teaches the importance of prayer for the sick, while Paul demonstrates that God may answer earnest prayer with sustaining grace rather than immediate removal. Both passages belong in the Bible, and both must be believed. A doctrine that cannot accommodate Paul's thorn has not properly understood James's prayer.

Conclusion

James 5 establishes that physical sickness is a legitimate concern for prayer among God's people. The afflicted are not commanded to conceal their condition, pretend that symptoms have vanished, or endure suffering without seeking the Lord. James directs the sick to call for the elders, receive prayer, and look to the Lord who possesses power to raise them up. He connects prayer with faith, encourages confession where faults are present, and declares that effectual fervent prayer avails much. His example of Elijah demonstrates that God hears His servants and acts in extraordinary ways according to His purposes. These truths should encourage Christians to pray earnestly and ministers to care faithfully for the suffering. But the Jewish address of the epistle, its historical setting, and the broader testimony of Scripture must not be ignored. James did not authorize a religious industry built around manipulating the desperate. He instructed God's people concerning prayerful dependence upon the Lord.

The abuse of this passage becomes particularly cruel when the responsibility for every unhealed condition is placed upon the person suffering. A believer struggling with cancer,

paralysis, chronic pain, or another serious condition does not need a self-appointed judge announcing that insufficient faith must be responsible. The Bible records Job's afflictions, the man born blind, Paul's thorn, Timothy's infirmities, and Trophimus being left sick. Those accounts forbid careless universal accusations. Certainly, Christians should examine themselves, confess known sins, and correct conduct that violates Scripture. But repentance must address actual sin, not imaginary offences invented to explain an illness. Prayer should be accompanied by compassion, practical assistance, and appropriate medical care. No believer should be encouraged to abandon necessary treatment because somebody has declared a healing that cannot be established. The Lord who may work through extraordinary means also possesses authority over the ordinary means by which physical needs are addressed. Faith does not require dishonesty, and dependence upon God does not forbid responsible action.

The final lesson is that prayer belongs beneath the authority of Almighty God, not above it. James declares that the Lord shall raise up the sick in the circumstances he describes, while John teaches confidence in petitions according to God's will and Paul demonstrates that the Lord may permit an affliction to remain while supplying sufficient grace. These truths must stand together. Christians should approach the throne of grace boldly, pray earnestly for healing, and thank God for genuine restoration. They should also remain faithful when the desired answer does not arrive. The ultimate promise of bodily redemption remains certain, for Romans 8:23 declares that believers await “the redemption of our body.” Until that day, the saved may experience weakness while possessing everlasting life through Jesus Christ. The Lord's authority is not diminished by the continuation of suffering, nor is His mercy measured solely by the removal of disease. **The prayer of faith trusts the God who answers; it does not presume to become the God who decides the answer.**

6 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – My Grace Is Sufficient for Thee: Paul, Timothy, and the Sick Saints

Key Passage: 2 Corinthians 12:7–10 (KJV)

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the

power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

If there was ever a man who should have been able to claim perfect physical health by the modern doctrine of guaranteed divine healing, that man was the apostle Paul. Here was a man who had personally encountered the risen Lord Jesus Christ, received revelations unavailable to ordinary men, performed extraordinary miracles, raised the dead, cast out devils, and demonstrated the unmistakable signs of an apostle. In Acts 19, God wrought special miracles through him so that handkerchiefs and aprons carried from his body were associated with the departure of diseases and evil spirits. Yet this same apostle pleaded with the Lord to remove an affliction from his own flesh, and the Lord refused to remove it. That ought to cause some serious trouble in the headquarters of the guaranteed-healing business. The man who could minister healing to others could not command his own thorn to disappear. The apostle who possessed genuine supernatural credentials received something better than the answer he requested: sufficient grace to endure what God permitted to remain.

The difficulty with much modern healing doctrine is that its advocates want Paul's miracles without Paul's infirmities, his apostolic authority without his suffering, and his spiritual power without the humiliating limitations of his flesh. They will preach Acts 19 until the congregation is shouting, but when the preaching reaches Second Corinthians 12, the enthusiasm suddenly develops a severe case of silence. They can explain handkerchiefs, aprons, and extraordinary healings, but they have considerable trouble explaining why the man through whom those miracles occurred was left with an affliction he desperately wanted removed. The answer is not hidden in a secret manuscript, a religious tradition, or some elaborate theological invention. It is written in the King James Bible. The Lord told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." God did not apologize for permitting the affliction. He explained its purpose and promised the grace necessary to endure it.

The record becomes even more devastating to the doctrine of guaranteed physical healing when Paul's companions enter the picture. Timothy had frequent infirmities and stomach trouble. Epaphroditus became so sick that he nearly died while serving Christ. Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. Luke, identified as the beloved physician, remained among Paul's faithful companions. These were not strangers who had wandered into a church meeting looking for a miracle. They were men involved in the work of the gospel, some under the direct instruction of the greatest missionary apostle in the New Testament. Their sicknesses cannot honestly be dismissed as proof that they lacked saving faith or had

somehow forgotten the promises of God. The Holy Ghost deliberately preserved these accounts so that believers might understand something about suffering, prayer, grace, and the limitations of the present body. God can heal, but He is not obligated to remove every affliction before the redemption of the body. The Bible teaches both truths, and neither may be sacrificed to protect a religious system.

1. The Apostle Who Healed Others but Could Not Heal Himself

Acts 14 records Paul healing a man at Lystra who was crippled from his mother's womb and had never walked. Paul perceived that the man had faith to be healed and commanded him to stand upright upon his feet. The man leaped and walked. The result was so extraordinary that the people attempted to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. In Acts 19:11–12, the Holy Ghost records that God wrought special miracles by Paul's hands, including healings associated with handkerchiefs and aprons brought from his body. Acts 28:8–9 records Paul praying over the father of Publius, laying hands upon him, and healing him, after which others on the island came and were healed. These were genuine miracles. Paul was not guessing, experimenting, or conducting a theatrical performance. God was confirming apostolic testimony through extraordinary works, precisely as Second Corinthians 12:12 identifies signs, wonders, and mighty deeds as credentials of apostleship.

Now consider the problem this creates for the modern claim that sufficient faith guarantees immediate physical healing. Paul possessed the credentials that modern self-appointed miracle workers claim to possess. He had witnessed remarkable restorations and personally exercised authority granted by Christ. Yet when he prayed concerning his own affliction, the Lord did not remove it. If healing could be claimed automatically through sufficient confidence, Paul should have been among the first men capable of demonstrating that principle. His faith had endured persecution, imprisonment, shipwreck, beatings, and the constant dangers of missionary labour. The man was not spiritually timid. He did not need a religious entertainer to teach him how to believe God. Nevertheless, he remained dependent upon the Lord's decision concerning his affliction. The distinction is unmistakable: possessing apostolic authority to perform particular signs did not mean possessing independent control over every bodily condition. God performed the miracles. Paul remained the servant.

The larger lesson concerns the purpose of apostolic signs. Hebrews 2:3–4 explains that God confirmed the message through signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will. The words “according to his own will” should prevent anyone from treating miraculous gifts as personal property that can be exercised whenever human ambition demands. The extraordinary works authenticated God's chosen

messengers during the foundational period of New Testament revelation. They did not transform those messengers into little gods who could command every circumstance. Paul could preach Christ crucified, perform extraordinary miracles, and still experience physical weakness. His authority was derived from the Lord, never independent of Him. A preacher who assumes that possessing enough faith makes him sovereign over disease has made a rather serious promotion without receiving authorization from Heaven. Paul understood something such men often overlook: the power belongs to God, and the instrument never becomes the source.

2. The Thorn in the Flesh and the Messenger of Satan

Second Corinthians 12:7 begins with Paul explaining why the thorn was permitted: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations.” The apostle had received extraordinary revelations and described being caught up into paradise, where he heard unspeakable words. Such privileges could become occasions for spiritual pride if a man began treating himself as more important than the God who revealed them. The Lord therefore permitted an affliction that would continually remind Paul of his dependence. Notice the wording: “there was given to me a thorn in the flesh.” The expression identifies something grievous and persistent, not a pleasant inconvenience Paul merely imagined. He further describes it as “the messenger of Satan to buffet me.” Satan was involved in the affliction, yet God governed its permitted purpose. The devil intended harm, but the Lord used the circumstance to prevent pride from destroying His servant.

The expression “thorn in the flesh” has produced considerable discussion because Paul does not explicitly identify the precise condition. Some have connected it with his bodily infirmity in Galatians 4 and the Galatians' willingness to give him their eyes. Others emphasize the opposition and persecution accompanying his ministry. The passage identifies the messenger of Satan, the buffeting, and the purpose of humbling Paul, but it does not supply a medical diagnosis. We must not pretend that Scripture names a particular disease when it does not. Nevertheless, the repeated references to weakness and infirmity establish that this affliction genuinely burdened the apostle's life. The comparison to a thorn is especially instructive. A thorn need not be enormous to cause continuous trouble. A tiny splinter beneath the skin can make a grown man miserable whenever he touches the affected place. Sometimes a persistent weakness accomplishes what a dramatic catastrophe never could: it keeps a man conscious that he is not sufficient in himself.

The relationship between Satan's activity and God's purpose deserves careful attention. Job's experience demonstrates that the devil may afflict a righteous servant without

establishing that the afflicted person is secretly wicked. Job's friends constructed accusations against him, but the opening chapters reveal circumstances they did not understand. Likewise, Paul's thorn was not presented as punishment for a particular moral failure. It was permitted to prevent exaltation through the abundance of revelations. There is an enormous difference between corrective discipline for known sin and an affliction allowed for another purpose. Modern religious accusers frequently overlook that distinction. They see a suffering Christian and immediately begin searching for some hidden transgression that will explain the condition. Yet Paul's testimony demonstrates that God may permit weakness in the life of a faithful servant for reasons unrelated to personal rebellion. The presence of an affliction does not grant every spectator permission to appoint himself the investigator of another man's conscience.

3. Through Infirmity of the Flesh: Paul's Testimony to the Galatians

Galatians 4:13 contains a remarkable admission: “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.” The apostle openly acknowledges bodily weakness during his ministry among the Galatians. He does not conceal the condition, deny its existence, or accuse his hearers of unbelief for recognizing it. His infirmity was sufficiently apparent that the believers knew about it. Yet Paul continued preaching the gospel. The physical condition did not invalidate his apostolic calling, and the presence of weakness did not make the message powerless. In fact, his testimony demonstrates that the Lord can accomplish spiritual work through a servant whose body is less than healthy. The modern notion that a Christian must first obtain complete physical restoration before becoming useful to God is plainly contradicted by the apostle's experience. Paul did not postpone his ministry until every infirmity disappeared. He preached while the infirmity was present.

Galatians 4:14 continues, “And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.” The Galatians did not despise Paul because of the bodily condition associated with his ministry. They received him with affection and recognized the truth he preached. Verse 15 then records his statement that, if possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him. This language has led to the reasonable suggestion that Paul suffered from some form of eye trouble, although the passage does not explicitly identify the condition. Galatians 6:11, where Paul calls attention to the large letter written with his own hand, has also been considered in that connection. The evidence deserves examination, but it does not authorize an invented diagnosis. The established fact is enough: Paul ministered through bodily infirmity, and the believers recognized the weakness without treating him as spiritually disqualified.

There is an important lesson in the Galatians' conduct. They did not demand that Paul prove his apostolic credentials by demonstrating uninterrupted health. They recognized the gospel he preached and received him despite the physical difficulty accompanying his ministry. Their compassion contrasts sharply with the modern habit of measuring spirituality by bodily condition. A faithful preacher with failing eyesight, damaged hearing, chronic pain, or another limitation may possess more sound doctrine than a healthy performer whose greatest accomplishment is attracting an audience. The condition of the messenger does not determine the truth of the message. Paul would later rebuke the Galatians for drifting toward legal bondage, but he remembered their earlier affection when his infirmity had not hindered their reception of the gospel. Physical weakness did not prevent God from using him, and it did not prevent believers from being blessed through his ministry. A frail vessel may still carry a treasure of immeasurable worth.

4. Three Prayers, One Answer, and Sufficient Grace

Second Corinthians 12:8 records Paul's response to his affliction: “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” Notice that Paul prayed for removal. He did not pretend to enjoy the suffering, and he did not treat the desire for relief as a spiritual defect. The apostle knew that the Lord possessed power to remove the thorn, and he brought the matter before Him repeatedly. That is an important correction to the notion that accepting God's will means refusing to ask for healing. Paul asked. He asked earnestly. He asked more than once. The man who had witnessed extraordinary miracles sought divine intervention concerning his own weakness. Yet the record does not present his repeated prayers as an attempt to force the Lord into submission. Paul approached the One who possessed authority over the outcome. Prayer is the privilege of dependence, not an instrument for placing Almighty God under human command.

The Lord answered with words that have strengthened afflicted saints for generations: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” God did not say that Paul lacked faith. He did not instruct him to repeat a formula until the thorn disappeared. He did not promise removal after a specified number of additional prayers. The answer was sufficient grace. The Lord's strength would be manifested through the servant's continuing weakness. That is not the answer Paul originally requested, but it was an answer from God. The distinction is essential. An unanswered request for removal does not necessarily mean that the Lord has ignored the petitioner. Sometimes the answer concerns what God will supply while the affliction remains. Grace does not always remove the burden; sometimes grace makes the burden bearable without allowing it to destroy the servant. The thorn remained an instrument of humiliation, but divine strength prevented weakness from becoming spiritual defeat.

Paul's response was equally remarkable: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” The apostle was not celebrating pain as though suffering were pleasant. He was rejoicing in the spiritual result of God's answer. His weakness created an occasion for the power of Christ to be manifested. Verse 10 continues with infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses, concluding, “for when I am weak, then am I strong.” These expressions encompass the hardships of apostolic service, including bodily weakness and the opposition surrounding his ministry. The strength Paul celebrates is not the sudden disappearance of every difficulty. It is the power of Christ sustaining him through circumstances beyond his natural ability. A man who can preach only when the road is smooth has not yet learned much about the grace that carried Paul through storms, prisons, beatings, and the continued buffeting of his flesh.

5. Timothy's Frequent Infirmities and the Apostle's Practical Counsel

First Timothy 5:23 contains one of the most inconvenient verses in the New Testament for the doctrine of guaranteed immediate healing: “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.” Here is Paul writing to Timothy, his own son in the faith and trusted companion in the ministry. Timothy was not a wandering unbeliever who had accidentally entered a church meeting. He was a faithful servant entrusted with serious responsibilities concerning doctrine, church order, and the conduct of God's people. Yet Paul acknowledges that Timothy suffered from stomach trouble and frequent infirmities. The word “often” deserves attention. His difficulties were recurring, not merely a single passing complaint. The Holy Ghost did not conceal them to protect an attractive religious theory. He recorded them plainly in the apostle's instruction to a minister of Jesus Christ.

Now observe what Paul actually prescribed. He did not command Timothy to announce that his stomach was already healed. He did not tell him to reject practical treatment, discontinue ordinary care, or consider every recurrence proof of spiritual failure. He offered specific practical counsel concerning Timothy's physical condition. The reference to a little wine belongs to that historical recommendation and should not be converted into a general command for Christians to consume alcohol or an excuse for drunkenness. Modern treatment should be based upon appropriate medical judgment rather than the assumption that a first-century remedy must be reproduced universally. But the doctrinal principle remains unmistakable: Paul did not consider the use of a physical remedy incompatible with faith in God. If appropriate treatment were an admission of unbelief, the apostle himself would have been teaching unbelief. That conclusion is absurd. Faith and

responsible physical care are not enemies merely because some religious performer has declared war upon medicine.

Timothy's condition also demonstrates why the spiritual standing of a Christian cannot be measured by the absence of disease. Paul instructed him to preach the Word, maintain sound doctrine, endure afflictions, and fulfil the work of the ministry. He did not tell him that his recurring physical difficulties disqualified him from service. Second Timothy 4:5 commands him to endure afflictions and perform the work of an evangelist. The emphasis is upon faithfulness to the calling, not the possession of an indestructible body. A minister may require medication, treatment, rest, or assistance while remaining obedient to the Lord. The flesh is still subject to weakness, and the redeemed body has not yet received its promised transformation. Timothy did not become less useful because he possessed a troublesome stomach. The Lord had work for him to perform, and Paul gave him instruction concerning both the work and the body through which he performed it.

6. Epaphroditus: Faithful Unto the Edge of Death

Philippians 2:25 introduces Epaphroditus with an impressive description. Paul calls him his brother, companion in labour, fellow soldier, messenger of the Philippians, and minister to his wants. Those expressions identify a man actively serving Christ and assisting the apostle. Epaphroditus was not living in careless rebellion or pursuing an easy religious life. He had undertaken responsibilities associated with the gospel and the support of Paul's ministry. Yet verse 27 declares, “For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” The condition was serious enough to bring him near death. Paul does not identify the specific illness, and the passage gives no indication that the sickness resulted from hidden sin. The man was a faithful servant who became gravely ill while involved in Christian service.

The emotional and practical consequences were substantial. Epaphroditus was distressed because the Philippians had heard that he was sick, and Paul was concerned about the possibility of losing a beloved fellow labourer. The apostle openly acknowledges that Epaphroditus's death would have added sorrow to his existing burdens. There is nothing spiritually defective about that admission. Paul did not pretend that losing a faithful brother would be insignificant. He did not deliver a speech claiming that grief was incompatible with faith. He recognized the seriousness of the circumstances and thanked God for showing mercy. The recovery of Epaphroditus was a genuine blessing, but the passage does not present Paul as exercising unlimited authority to guarantee the outcome. The Lord had mercy upon the sick man and upon those who loved him. That is the language of

dependence, gratitude, and divine compassion, not the language of a man congratulating himself for having mastered a supernatural technique.

Philippians 2:30 explains the circumstances further: “Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” Epaphroditus had endangered himself through devoted service to Christ. His illness was connected with the hazards and demands surrounding his ministry, not presented as punishment for spiritual carelessness. Paul therefore instructed the Philippians to receive him in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in reputation. Imagine the contradiction if a modern congregation were to condemn Epaphroditus for lacking faith when the apostle commanded believers to honour him. The Holy Ghost calls attention to his sacrificial devotion, while religious presumption would attempt to turn his sickness into an accusation. God restored the man, and Paul recognized the recovery as mercy. The lesson is not that every faithful servant will escape death whenever he becomes ill. It is that faithful service may involve genuine physical danger, and recovery deserves thanksgiving rather than boasting.

7. Trophimus Left Sick and the Physician Who Stayed

Second Timothy 4:20 contains a brief statement with tremendous doctrinal consequences: “Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” There is no extended explanation, elaborate qualification, or attempt to protect a theory of guaranteed healing. Paul simply records that he left Trophimus sick. This is the same apostle through whom God had performed extraordinary miracles during the Acts period. The same man who had seen crippled people walk and diseases depart now reports that a fellow labourer remained afflicted. The verse does not say Trophimus had committed secret wickedness. It does not say Paul had lost salvation, abandoned the faith, or ceased believing in God's power. It records the ordinary historical fact that a Christian companion was sick and remained behind. That simple statement creates an enormous difficulty for anyone claiming that apostolic faith necessarily produced immediate healing in every circumstance.

The later Pauline epistles reveal a ministry increasingly marked by imprisonment, hardship, approaching death, and the endurance of suffering. Paul could once walk out of prison following an earthquake in Acts 16, but he later wrote from confinement and faced the prospect of execution. His circumstances had changed, but Christ had not become powerless. The foundational signs recorded in Acts served particular purposes in the confirmation and spread of apostolic testimony. They were never a guarantee that Paul could command every prison door to open or every illness to disappear whenever he wished. The distinction between the power of God and the apostle's authority remains

essential. God may perform miracles according to His will, but His servants do not possess independent control over His operations. Trophimus was left sick because the biblical record does not present apostolic ministry as a permanent exemption from bodily weakness. The Lord's faithfulness did not depend upon every companion remaining healthy.

There is another detail worth examining. Colossians 4:14 identifies Luke as “the beloved physician,” and Second Timothy 4:11 records Paul's statement, “Only Luke is with me.” The Bible does not explicitly say that Luke personally treated every illness Paul experienced, and we must not invent details that Scripture leaves unstated. Nevertheless, the presence of a physician among Paul's companions demonstrates that medical knowledge was not automatically rejected as contrary to faith. Luke was a fellow labourer associated with the apostolic ministry, and his professional identity was preserved in Scripture without condemnation. The same New Testament that records extraordinary healings also acknowledges bodily infirmities and practical medical knowledge. A Christian need not choose between praying to the Lord and seeking competent treatment. God is able to heal through extraordinary intervention, and He may also preserve life through ordinary means. The physician does not replace the Lord, and prayer does not make responsible medical care unnecessary.

The evidence from Paul and his companions presents a consistent picture when the passages are allowed to speak for themselves. Paul exercised genuine apostolic authority, yet he endured affliction. Timothy served faithfully, yet experienced recurring infirmities. Epaphroditus risked his life in Christian service and became sick nearly unto death. Trophimus remained sick when Paul departed from Miletum. Luke continued as a faithful companion and was identified as a physician. None of these accounts requires the conclusion that God had abandoned His servants or that their faith was defective. They demonstrate that the redeemed remain subject to bodily weakness while awaiting the promised redemption of the body. Romans 8:23 declares that believers groan within themselves, waiting for that redemption. Second Corinthians 4:16 explains that although the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day. The Christian possesses eternal life now, but his present body has not yet received immortality.

The doctrine of guaranteed immediate healing fails because it confuses God's ability with an obligation He has not imposed upon Himself. The Lord can remove disease, and Christians should pray earnestly for His intervention. He may restore health through extraordinary means, competent medical care, or a combination of circumstances governed by His providence. But Scripture does not authorize anyone to condemn a suffering believer merely because the desired recovery has not occurred. A sick Christian

may possess genuine faith, sound doctrine, a clean conscience, and a faithful record of service while remaining physically afflicted. The apostle Paul establishes that truth beyond reasonable dispute. His thorn did not disappear, but the grace of Christ remained sufficient. The Lord did not promise that every difficulty would be removed. He promised strength for the servant required to endure it. A theology that cannot accommodate a suffering apostle has no business judging a suffering saint.

The final answer to bodily weakness is not found in a religious formula but in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15 declares that the corruptible must put on incorruption and the mortal must put on immortality. Philippians 3:20–21 promises that the Lord shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. Until that appointed transformation, believers inhabit mortal bodies subject to infirmity, deterioration, and death. Yet the weakness of the outward man cannot annul the salvation secured through the finished work of Christ. Paul could face suffering, imprisonment, and approaching death with confidence because his hope rested upon the risen Saviour. The same Lord who refused to remove the thorn promised sufficient grace to sustain His servant. That grace did not make the affliction pleasant, but it made faithful endurance possible. **God does not have to remove the thorn to prove that He is present. Sometimes the clearest demonstration of His power is the servant who keeps standing while the thorn remains.**

7 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – Luke the Beloved Physician: Faith, Medicine, and the Wisdom of God

Key Passage: Colossians 4:14 (KJV)

“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.”

There is something profoundly foolish about a religious system that tells a Christian to trust God by refusing the very means God may use to preserve his life. A man develops a serious infection, and some self-appointed guardian of supernatural faith informs him that taking antibiotics would demonstrate unbelief. Another man experiences crushing chest pain, and somebody advises him to stay home, rebuke the devil, and avoid the hospital because visiting a physician would supposedly dishonour the Lord. Meanwhile, the apostle Paul closes his letter to the Colossians by sending greetings from a man he identifies as “Luke, the beloved physician.” Imagine that! The Holy Ghost permitted the word *physician* to appear in the New Testament without attaching a warning label, issuing a rebuke, or announcing that medical knowledge was contrary to faith. Evidently, somebody forgot to

inform Paul that a doctor was supposed to be an enemy of divine healing. The contradiction exists in modern religious foolishness, not in the King James Bible. God remains the Author of life, and His authority is not threatened by the instruments through which He chooses to preserve it.

The controversy is not whether physicians possess unlimited knowledge or whether medicine can accomplish everything its advocates promise. Doctors make mistakes, treatments sometimes fail, and the most advanced hospital on earth cannot guarantee that a dying man will live another twenty-four hours. Neither can a preacher guarantee that outcome by shouting louder, laying hands upon a forehead, or collecting a larger offering. Both physician and minister remain men, and neither occupies the throne of Almighty God. The question is whether seeking competent medical treatment necessarily contradicts trusting the Lord. Scripture answers that question through its own examples. Jesus Christ acknowledged the need of sick people for a physician. The Samaritan treated a wounded traveller with oil and wine. Isaiah instructed that a lump of figs be placed upon Hezekiah's boil. Paul recommended a particular remedy for Timothy's recurring stomach trouble. These accounts do not establish modern medical science as infallible, but they certainly destroy the claim that receiving physical treatment is inherently sinful.

The proper biblical position refuses two equally dangerous errors. One makes medicine a substitute for God, treating human knowledge as though the Creator were unnecessary. The other makes medical treatment an enemy of faith, requiring suffering Christians to reject legitimate help in order to satisfy somebody else's religious theory. Neither position survives careful examination of Scripture. Proverbs 3:5–6 declares, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” That instruction does not limit the acknowledgment of God to Sunday morning worship or the moment before a meal. It governs the entire Christian life, including the care of the body. A believer should pray, exercise judgment, obtain appropriate treatment, and remain conscious that every breath ultimately depends upon the Lord. The physician may diagnose, the medicine may treat, and the surgeon may operate, but God remains the One before whom every human ability must bow.

1. Luke the Beloved Physician and the Apostle Who Kept Him Close

Colossians 4:14 identifies Luke by two remarkable expressions: he was beloved, and he was a physician. The first describes the affection associated with this faithful companion, while the second identifies his professional calling. Paul did not introduce him as a former physician who had abandoned medical knowledge upon becoming a Christian. He called him “the beloved physician.” That designation appears in an inspired epistle addressed to believers in the Body of Christ. It is not hidden in an obscure historical account requiring

elaborate interpretation. There it stands in plain English. Luke was associated with apostolic ministry, and his professional identity remained sufficiently significant for Paul to mention it. The verse does not describe the extent of Luke's medical practice during his missionary travels, and it would be careless to invent treatments Scripture does not record. Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost presents his identity without condemnation. A profession that is inherently incompatible with Christian faith would make a strange compliment in an apostolic greeting.

Luke's faithfulness becomes especially significant when compared with the later testimony of Paul. Second Timothy 4:11 contains the moving statement, “Only Luke is with me.” The apostle was approaching the end of his earthly course, experiencing imprisonment and the departure of various companions, yet Luke remained. The same physician identified in Colossians appears as a faithful associate in the final recorded circumstances of Paul's ministry. Luke also wrote the Gospel bearing his name and the Acts of the Apostles, providing extensive testimony concerning the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and the spread of the gospel. In Luke 1:3, he explained that he had perfect understanding of the matters from the very first and wrote them in order. His medical occupation did not prevent him from being a faithful witness to divine revelation. The man possessed professional knowledge, yet his lasting contribution to the Church came through the inspired record of the Lord's work. Medical training did not make him an apostle, but neither did Christian service require him to despise the knowledge he possessed.

There is a valuable distinction between recognizing the legitimate place of a physician and attributing spiritual authority to medical knowledge. Luke could understand the human body without possessing the power to create one. He could be associated with extraordinary apostolic miracles without being identified as the source of those miracles. Acts records God performing special works through Paul, while Colossians identifies Luke as a physician serving alongside him. The two facts are not contradictory. The presence of a doctor does not mean that God cannot heal, and the occurrence of a miracle does not mean that medical care has become unnecessary. A farmer may pray for a harvest and still plant seed. A carpenter may ask God to preserve his household and still repair a rotten staircase. A Christian may pray for healing and still seek qualified treatment. There is no prize for confusing negligence with faith, and the Book never commands a man to abandon ordinary responsibility in order to demonstrate extraordinary spirituality.

2. They That Are Sick Need a Physician: Christ's Own Words

Luke 5:31 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.” The statement occurs when the Pharisees and scribes complain that Jesus eats and drinks with publicans and sinners. Levi had prepared a feast,

and the Lord was being criticized for His association with people the religious establishment considered unworthy. Christ answered their objection through an illustration drawn from ordinary human experience. Healthy people do not ordinarily require a physician, but sick people do. He then explained the spiritual application: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). The primary subject was His mission toward sinners, not a medical lecture. Nevertheless, the illustration depends upon an accepted truth concerning the usefulness of physicians. Christ did not compare His saving ministry to something inherently wicked. He employed the familiar relationship between sickness and medical assistance to explain why He came to those needing repentance.

That distinction must be maintained. Jesus Christ was not teaching that physicians can forgive sins, regenerate the soul, or accomplish what His blood alone can accomplish. The physician treats bodily conditions within the limits of human ability. The Saviour deals with the sinner's standing before a holy God. Luke 5 itself supplies a tremendous demonstration of the difference when Christ heals the man sick of the palsy after first declaring that his sins are forgiven. The scribes questioned His authority to forgive sins, and Jesus healed the man to demonstrate that the Son of man possessed that authority upon earth. The physical miracle confirmed His divine identity, but forgiveness remained the greater issue. A man may recover from a broken leg and remain spiritually lost. Another may die from an incurable illness while possessing everlasting life through Jesus Christ. The doctor cannot substitute for the Redeemer, but neither does the Redeemer command His people to despise legitimate care for the body.

There is also a necessary warning against treating the words of Christ as an endorsement of every medical theory or every treatment proposed by men. The Lord acknowledged the need of the sick for a physician; He did not pronounce every physician competent, every diagnosis accurate, or every prescription beneficial. Human knowledge remains limited. Doctors may disagree, treatments carry risks, and medical decisions require informed judgment. Yet none of those limitations proves that medical care should be abandoned. A mechanic can make a mistake while repairing an automobile, but that hardly establishes the wisdom of driving a vehicle with no brakes. The sensible response to human fallibility is careful judgment, not reckless rejection of every available means. Christians should seek competent professionals, ask appropriate questions, consider the risks and benefits of treatment, and pray for wisdom throughout the process. Faith does not demand that a man surrender his judgment to a physician, but it does not authorize him to replace qualified care with religious guesswork either.

3. The Good Samaritan: Compassion That Bound Up the Wounds

Luke 10:30–37 supplies one of the strongest biblical illustrations of practical assistance to an injured person. A certain man travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, was stripped, wounded, and left half dead. A priest passed by and continued on his way. A Levite likewise observed the situation and passed by on the other side. Then a Samaritan came to the wounded man, saw him, and had compassion. Verse 34 records that he “went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.” He then placed the injured traveller upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The account was given in response to a question concerning loving one's neighbour, and the Lord used it to expose the emptiness of religious pretension without practical mercy. The Samaritan did not merely express concern. He acted upon it.

Notice the details of his care. He approached the wounded man, treated the injuries with the substances available to him, applied bandages, provided transportation, arranged shelter, and assumed financial responsibility for continued assistance. The oil and wine belonged to the practical treatment described in the historical illustration. The passage does not establish a modern formula for treating serious wounds, nor should anyone assume that the same substances constitute appropriate medical care for every injury today. The doctrinal point concerns mercy expressed through responsible action. The Samaritan used available means to help a person who could not help himself. There is no indication that he considered practical treatment an insult to God. Indeed, Christ presented his conduct as an example of neighbourly compassion. The religious men passed by, but the Samaritan stopped and helped. Evidently, the wounded traveller needed more than an impressive discussion concerning the theoretical possibilities of divine intervention.

The Samaritan also understood that helping a wounded person could require considerable personal expense. He gave the innkeeper two pence and promised to repay additional reasonable costs upon returning. His compassion did not evaporate when the immediate excitement passed. He made provision for continuing care. That is a sharp rebuke to the kind of religion that can fill an auditorium with declarations about healing while leaving a suffering neighbour without transportation to the hospital. A Christian who prays for the injured should also consider whether he can help obtain emergency assistance, provide necessary supplies, or support the family during recovery. Prayer and practical charity belong together rather than competing for attention. James 2:15–16 warns against merely telling a needy brother or sister to depart in peace and be warmed and filled while withholding necessary assistance. A prayer offered in faith should never become an excuse for refusing the ordinary duty of love.

4. Hezekiah's Boil: Prayer, a Plaster, and the Word of the LORD

Isaiah 38 records a king confronted with the certainty of approaching death. Hezekiah became sick, and Isaiah brought him the solemn message, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.” The king turned his face toward the wall and prayed unto the LORD. He wept sore, and God answered by promising to add fifteen years to his life. The account belongs to the historical dealings of the LORD with Judah and its king, not to a general guarantee that every Christian may claim an identical extension. Hezekiah received a particular word from God through a prophet. The Lord also supplied an extraordinary sign confirming His promise. Yet amid this unmistakably miraculous event stands a detail that certain opponents of medical treatment would prefer to overlook. Isaiah 38:21 declares, “For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.”

There is the biblical record in plain language. God promised to heal Hezekiah, and Isaiah instructed that a physical substance be applied to the afflicted place. Second Kings 20:7 records the action and its result: the lump of figs was laid upon the boil, and the king recovered. The Bible does not explain precisely how the plaster affected the condition, and it does not command Christians to treat serious infections with figs. The important point is that the use of a material application did not contradict the divine promise. The LORD could have healed Hezekiah without any visible means, just as Christ later healed people through a spoken command. Instead, God chose to include a physical action in the circumstances of this recovery. If using a remedy necessarily demonstrated unbelief, Isaiah would have been a strange messenger to prescribe one immediately after announcing God's answer. The King James Bible records both prayer and treatment without treating either as an enemy of the other.

Hezekiah's experience also teaches the limits of earthly healing. God extended his life by fifteen years, but Hezekiah did not become immortal. His recovery was genuine, and the promise was fulfilled, yet the king eventually died. The account therefore demonstrates divine authority over sickness without confusing temporary restoration with permanent redemption from corruption. It also illustrates why particular historical remedies should not be turned into universal medical prescriptions. The figs were associated with the treatment God appointed on that occasion. Modern medicine must be evaluated according to the condition being treated and the evidence concerning the proposed intervention. A serious infection may require urgent medical attention, and delaying effective care while experimenting with an ancient substance can be dangerous. The believer should honour what Scripture records without pretending that every recorded action must be reproduced in every generation. God has not commanded His people to confuse a historical miracle with a medical handbook.

5. Timothy's Stomach and the Apostle's Practical Prescription

First Timothy 5:23 contains another passage that creates considerable difficulty for anyone who insists that medical treatment is incompatible with faith. Paul writes, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.” The recipient was Timothy, a faithful minister entrusted with substantial responsibilities concerning doctrine, church order, and the conduct of believers. Timothy was not an unbeliever searching for the gospel. He was Paul's own son in the faith, serving in the work of Jesus Christ. Yet he suffered from stomach trouble and recurring infirmities. The word “often” is especially important because it describes a repeated condition rather than a single passing complaint. Paul knew about Timothy's difficulties and addressed them directly. He did not accuse Timothy of lacking faith, suggest that the afflictions automatically revealed secret sin, or instruct him to announce that his symptoms had vanished. He recommended a practical measure.

The reference to wine must be interpreted within its actual context. Paul was addressing Timothy's stomach and recurring infirmities, not issuing permission for drunkenness or establishing social drinking as a mark of Christian liberty. The expression “a little wine” belongs to a specific historical recommendation for a particular physical condition. The passage does not identify the precise composition of the wine or provide a universal treatment to be followed by modern patients. It certainly gives no authority to use alcohol recklessly, especially when safer and more effective medical alternatives exist. Ephesians 5:18 commands believers not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but to be filled with the Spirit. First Timothy 5:23 should not be turned into an excuse for violating biblical sobriety. The point is that Paul recognized the legitimacy of practical treatment. A man searching the Bible for permission to drink intoxicants recreationally has wandered a considerable distance from Timothy's stomach.

The apostle's conduct also exposes the foolishness of suggesting that every faithful minister must automatically experience perfect physical health. Paul had performed extraordinary miracles through the power of God, yet Timothy continued experiencing recurring ailments. The presence of apostolic authority did not mean that every condition could be removed whenever Paul desired. The Lord remained sovereign over the distribution and exercise of miraculous gifts. Timothy's infirmities did not make him spiritually worthless, and Paul did not withdraw his ministerial responsibilities. Instead, he continued instructing Timothy to preach, maintain sound doctrine, endure afflictions, and fulfil his ministry. A faithful Christian may require medical treatment while continuing to serve the Lord. The body may need attention without the soul being in rebellion. There is no

spiritual virtue in neglecting a condition that appropriate care might improve, and no biblical basis for treating medicine as a rival to prayer.

6. Trust in the LORD: Faith, Physicians, and Responsible Judgment

Proverbs 3:5–8 establishes the governing principle for the Christian's approach to medical decisions. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” The passage continues by commanding acknowledgment of God in all one's ways and warning against being wise in one's own eyes. The promise concerning health to the navel and marrow to the bones follows these commands. In its original setting, Proverbs provides instruction concerning wisdom, obedience, and the fear of the LORD. It should not be turned into an unconditional guarantee that every obedient Christian will never become sick. Nevertheless, its practical application is unmistakable. Human knowledge must remain subordinate to divine wisdom. A physician may possess considerable training, but he is not omniscient. A patient may research a condition, but he does not thereby acquire unlimited understanding. The Christian should neither idolize human expertise nor despise it. He should acknowledge the Lord while making responsible decisions.

Second Chronicles 16:12 records a revealing incident concerning King Asa: “And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.” The rebuke concerns Asa's failure to seek the LORD, not an explicit divine prohibition against every form of medical treatment. The surrounding chapters reveal a pattern of misplaced confidence, including reliance upon human alliances instead of trusting God's direction. Asa's problem was that he excluded the Lord from his dependence. Some religious teachers seize upon this verse and announce that consulting physicians is sinful, but that interpretation clashes with the biblical examples already examined. Christ acknowledged physicians, Luke was identified as one, Isaiah instructed the use of a plaster, and Paul advised Timothy concerning his infirmities. Asa's error was not that physicians existed. His error was seeking them while neglecting the LORD.

Modern Christians face medical circumstances that require both spiritual dependence and responsible action. A severe injury may require emergency treatment. A suspected stroke, heart attack, dangerous infection, or serious breathing difficulty should not be left untreated while someone attempts to prove superior faith. Appropriate emergency assistance should be sought without delay, and prayer can accompany that action rather than postponing it. Other conditions may require examinations, prescribed medicines, surgery, rehabilitation, or long-term care. None of these measures guarantees recovery, and every treatment deserves reasonable consideration of its benefits and risks. But

refusing qualified assistance merely to satisfy a religious demand can endanger life. The Christian should seek sound advice, understand the treatment being proposed, and make decisions with proper regard for medical evidence and the Lord's authority. God never commanded His people to demonstrate faith by behaving as though ordinary consequences no longer exist.

7. The Body Belongs to Christ, but the Physician Is Not God

First Corinthians 6:19–20 declares that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and that believers are bought with a price. Paul concludes, “therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” The immediate context concerns moral purity and the believer's responsibility to flee fornication, but the declaration that the body belongs to God has broader practical implications. A Christian is not free to treat his physical life as worthless. The body is not an object to be abused carelessly or neglected through stubbornness. It is the present instrument through which the believer works, serves, worships, witnesses, and fulfils earthly responsibilities. Proper nutrition, reasonable rest, necessary treatment, and responsible attention to physical limitations may all serve legitimate purposes. Such stewardship must not become an obsession that displaces spiritual priorities, but neither should the body be neglected under the pretence that its eventual resurrection makes present care irrelevant.

Medical professionals must also be kept in their proper place. A doctor is a human servant working within the limits of knowledge, experience, and available treatment. He may offer valuable assistance, but he cannot guarantee life, prevent every mistake, or control every outcome. Christians should respect competent medical judgment without surrendering their responsibility to ask questions and make informed decisions. They should also recognize that the Lord may grant healing beyond what human ability can accomplish. James 5 directs believers to pray for the sick, and First John 5:14 connects confidence in prayer with asking according to God's will. The physician's work and the Christian's prayers need not compete. One addresses the condition through available knowledge and treatment; the other brings the entire matter before the sovereign Lord. Neither medical skill nor earnest prayer gives a human being independent authority over life and death. God remains the ultimate authority over both.

The final redemption of the body places every earthly treatment in its proper perspective. Romans 8:23 declares that believers are waiting for “the redemption of our body.” Philippians 3:20–21 promises that the Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. First Corinthians 15 describes the transformation from corruption to incorruption and mortality to immortality. Until that appointed day, Christians remain subject to sickness, injury, deterioration, and death. Medical treatment

may preserve life, restore function, relieve suffering, or extend useful years, but it cannot confer immortality. The greatest surgeon eventually encounters a condition beyond his ability to correct. The most faithful minister cannot prevent every funeral. Yet the believer possesses a promise that reaches beyond the limits of both medicine and earthly miracles. Jesus Christ will complete the bodily redemption secured through His finished work, and no disease will survive that final transformation.

Conclusion

The King James Bible does not establish a conflict between trusting God and receiving legitimate medical care. Luke was the beloved physician. Jesus Christ acknowledged that sick people need a physician. The Samaritan treated the wounded traveller with oil and wine and provided continuing assistance. Isaiah instructed that a plaster of figs be placed upon Hezekiah's boil. Paul recommended practical treatment for Timothy's stomach and recurring infirmities. These passages arise from different historical settings, and none should be forced into a universal medical formula. Nevertheless, together they establish that using ordinary means to address bodily suffering is not inherently contrary to faith. The same Lord who can heal through an extraordinary miracle may permit recovery through skilled treatment, proper medication, surgery, or other legitimate assistance. The believer should thank God for genuine improvements without turning the physician into an idol. Human skill is useful, but divine authority remains supreme.

The religious teaching that demands rejection of medical treatment as proof of faith must be rejected because Scripture does not support it. A suffering Christian should not be intimidated into abandoning necessary care by somebody claiming that medicine demonstrates unbelief. Nor should an illness be dismissed as imaginary merely because a preacher has announced a cure. Real faith does not require dishonesty concerning symptoms, medical findings, or physical limitations. At the same time, Christians must resist the opposite error of treating medical knowledge as though God were unnecessary. Physicians are fallible, treatments carry risks, and human understanding remains limited. Prayer, sound judgment, appropriate care, and submission to the LORD belong together. The Christian may seek the best treatment reasonably available while recognizing that the ultimate outcome remains beyond human control. A doctor who acknowledges his limitations is exercising more wisdom than a religious performer who claims to possess authority God never gave him.

The believer's greatest hope does not rest upon finding a physician capable of preventing death forever. It rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who conquered death and promised the resurrection of those who belong to Him. Every earthly recovery remains temporary because the present body has not yet received incorruption. A successful operation may

add years, a medicine may relieve suffering, and rehabilitation may restore strength, but the final victory requires the transforming power of the risen Saviour. Until that day, Christians should care for the bodies God has entrusted to them, pray earnestly for His help, and use appropriate means without surrendering their confidence in Him. The physician may treat the wound, but he cannot redeem the soul. The preacher may pray over the sick, but he cannot command the Almighty. Jesus Christ alone possesses the authority to accomplish eternal redemption and raise the dead beyond the reach of corruption. **Faith does not refuse the physician to prove that God is powerful; faith uses legitimate means without forgetting who holds the power of life and death.**

8 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – Faith Is Not a Feeling: Trusting God When the Pain Remains

Key Passage: Romans 10:17 (KJV)

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

There is a great deal of religion being practiced today that has more to do with a man's imagination than with anything Almighty God ever said. A fellow gets sick, somebody tells him to believe he is healed, and before long he is expected to announce that his disease has disappeared while the symptoms remain exactly where they were. If he admits that he is still suffering, somebody accuses him of making a negative confession. If he visits a physician, he is warned that he is wavering in faith. If the treatment fails, the blame is placed upon him because he supposedly did not believe strongly enough. What began as a request for divine mercy becomes a religious performance in which the suffering man is expected to defend a miracle that has not occurred. Romans 10:17 puts an end to the nonsense before it gets started. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. It does not come by repeating something God never promised until a man convinces himself that his imagination has become divine revelation.

The King James Bible makes a distinction between fact, faith, and feeling that ought to be understood by every born-again believer. The facts are established by what God has revealed. Faith receives what God has said. Feelings may accompany that faith, but they cannot become its foundation. The gospel provides the clearest illustration. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Those are established facts concerning the finished work of Jesus Christ. The sinner believes the gospel and receives salvation by grace through faith, according to Ephesians 2:8–9. Joy, gratitude, peace, and assurance may follow, but

the believer is not saved because he experiences a particular sensation. He is saved because he has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. The same principle governs the Christian's response to physical suffering. Faith must rest upon what God has actually revealed, not upon the desperate hope that enough emotional excitement will compel Him to perform a particular miracle.

The difficulty with feelings is that they change without asking permission from the doctrines of Scripture. A man can rejoice in the morning, become discouraged by afternoon, and spend the evening wondering whether anything good will ever happen again. His emotional condition may change three times before supper, but the blood of Jesus Christ has not changed once. A sick believer may enjoy a comparatively comfortable day and feel encouraged, then experience severe pain during the night and struggle to remain cheerful. Neither condition determines whether God remains faithful. Second Corinthians 5:7 declares, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” That does not mean a Christian must deny what his eyes observe or what his body experiences. It means his confidence rests upon divine revelation rather than visible circumstances. The believer who trusts God while suffering possesses something far more substantial than a temporary burst of religious excitement. He possesses confidence in the Lord whose Word remains true when every pleasant feeling has departed.

1. Faith Cometh by Hearing, Not by Manufacturing a Feeling

Romans 10:17 establishes both the source and the foundation of biblical faith. Paul does not say that faith comes through emotional intensity, repeated declarations, or the ability to picture an outcome vividly enough. He says it comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The immediate context concerns the preaching of the gospel and Israel's responsibility for responding to the message. Romans 10:16 declares, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” The issue is whether men believe the divine testimony presented to them. Faith is not an independent power floating around inside the human imagination. It has an object, and saving faith rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. A man can possess tremendous confidence in something false, but confidence does not make the thing true. If believing something intensely enough made it a fact, every deceived religious enthusiast would become an infallible prophet.

This distinction becomes especially important when Christians pray concerning physical healing. Scripture plainly establishes that God can heal. Exodus 15:26 identifies Him as the LORD who heals. Matthew 8 records Jesus Christ healing the sick. Acts 3 describes a man lame from birth receiving strength through the authority of the risen Saviour. James 5 encourages prayer for the sick. Those are biblical facts. But a general statement

establishing God's ability does not automatically become a specific promise that every sick believer will recover immediately. A man may believe with absolute confidence that God possesses power to heal his disease while remaining uncertain whether the Lord intends to remove that disease today. Such uncertainty is not necessarily unbelief. It may simply reflect the absence of a revealed promise concerning that particular outcome. Faith is responsible for believing what God said, not for inventing something God did not say and then demanding that Heaven honour it.

Consider Abraham in Romans 4:20–21. He "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," being fully persuaded that God was able to perform what He had promised. Notice the foundation of his confidence. God had spoken. Abraham had received a definite promise concerning his seed, and his faith rested upon the faithfulness of the One who made it. His confidence was not produced by staring into the mirror and announcing that old age no longer existed. He recognized the condition of his body and the deadness of Sarah's womb, yet trusted God's explicit promise. That is biblical faith. A modern believer who has received no particular revelation guaranteeing immediate recovery cannot simply borrow Abraham's certainty concerning Isaac and apply it to an unpromised medical outcome. The same God is worthy of trust, but the promises must not be exchanged. Faith takes God at His Word; presumption attempts to put words into God's mouth.

2. The Substance of Things Hoped For and the Evidence Not Seen

Hebrews 11:1 declares, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The chapter then supplies a long record of men and women who acted upon the revelation God had given them. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. Noah prepared an ark after being warned concerning things not yet seen. Abraham obeyed when called to depart into a land he would afterward receive. Moses chose affliction with the people of God rather than the pleasures of sin for a season. These examples demonstrate that faith is not the absence of evidence or the abandonment of reason. It is confidence in the testimony of the God who cannot lie. Noah had never witnessed the coming judgment described to him, but the warning came from God. Abraham could not see the complete fulfillment of the promise, but he knew who had spoken. The unseen future was certain because the LORD had declared it.

Hebrews 11 also corrects the notion that genuine faith must always produce immediate earthly comfort. Verse 13 declares, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." There were promises whose fulfillment extended beyond the earthly lives of those who believed them. Their faith did not become defective because they died before receiving everything promised. The chapter also describes believers who experienced

mockings, scourgings, imprisonment, destitution, persecution, and death. Some escaped the sword, while others were slain with it. Some experienced extraordinary deliverance, while others endured extraordinary suffering. Yet the Holy Ghost places both groups within the same testimony of faith. That ought to cause considerable trouble for a doctrine insisting that believing God always results in immediate escape from physical difficulty. The Bible honours men who endured suffering as well as men who escaped it.

Hebrews 11:39 supplies the remarkable conclusion: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.” Their faith was genuine even though the complete fulfillment remained future. The historical and dispensational setting of these Old Testament examples must be respected, but the principle concerning God's faithfulness is unmistakable. A promise may be certain without being immediately fulfilled. A believer may trust God while awaiting something he has not yet received. Romans 8:23 declares that Christians presently wait for “the redemption of our body.” That future bodily transformation is guaranteed through Jesus Christ, but the present body remains subject to weakness and corruption. The Christian who suffers today is not required to pretend that resurrection has already occurred. He must believe the promise concerning its future accomplishment. Faith can wait because it trusts the One who promised. Presumption cannot wait because it has already appointed itself the manager of God's calendar.

3. Lord, I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief

Mark 9:14–29 records a heartbreaking encounter involving a father whose son was afflicted by a destructive spirit. The condition had produced terrible suffering, including violent episodes in which the child was cast into fire and water. The father had brought his son to the disciples, but they had been unable to deliver him. When Jesus arrived, the man explained the circumstances and pleaded, “if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.” The words reveal the desperation of a father who had watched his child suffer and had already experienced disappointment when help was sought. Christ answered, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” The statement occurred during the Lord's earthly ministry, when He was demonstrating His Messianic authority and correcting the disciples' failure. It must be read within that historical setting rather than transformed into an unrestricted guarantee concerning every modern request.

The father's response is one of the most memorable expressions of struggling faith in Scripture. Mark 9:24 declares, “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Here was a man who believed enough to approach Christ and plead for help, yet honestly acknowledged the weakness accompanying his faith. He did not manufacture a grand declaration of perfect confidence.

He did not pretend that his distress had disappeared. He admitted the truth while casting himself upon the mercy of the Lord. Jesus rebuked the foul spirit, commanded it to depart, and restored the child. The miracle was genuine, and the authority belonged to Christ. The account does not teach that a father must first achieve flawless emotional certainty before he may approach God. It demonstrates the compassion and authority of the Saviour toward a desperately afflicted child and a pleading parent.

There is something particularly cruel about taking this account and using it to condemn suffering parents whose children have not experienced comparable deliverance. The father in Mark 9 received an extraordinary miracle during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. The passage establishes what Christ did in those circumstances. It does not authorize a modern preacher to guarantee an identical outcome for every disabled or seriously ill child. Nor does it establish that continuing illness proves the parents failed to believe sufficiently. The disciples themselves had been unable to deliver the child, and Jesus subsequently instructed them concerning prayer. The lesson should produce humility and dependence, not arrogance toward those who suffer. A man who uses the tears of that father as ammunition against another grieving family has missed the compassion of the passage. The Lord corrected unbelief without turning the afflicted into objects of religious contempt.

4. Walking by Faith Does Not Mean Lying About What Is Seen

Second Corinthians 5:7 declares, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The surrounding passage concerns the believer's present earthly condition and the future hope of being with the Lord. Paul describes the earthly house of this tabernacle dissolving and the eternal building of God awaiting the redeemed. He acknowledges that believers groan, being burdened, while longing for the promised transformation. That is the context in which walking by faith appears. Paul was not instructing Christians to deny visible reality. He was explaining that their confidence concerning future glory rests upon divine revelation rather than upon present observation. The mortal body remains subject to weakness, and the apostle freely admits that fact. Evidently, Paul had not attended the modern school of religious confession where mentioning an infirmity is considered more dangerous than possessing one. He recognized present suffering while trusting the promise of future redemption.

The Bible repeatedly records faithful men acknowledging physical conditions without treating those acknowledgments as unbelief. Hezekiah was sick, prayed, and received a promise of restoration. Timothy suffered frequent infirmities, and Paul recommended practical treatment. Epaphroditus became sick nigh unto death, and the apostle thanked God for showing mercy when he recovered. Paul himself pleaded concerning a thorn in the flesh that remained. None of these men improved his spiritual standing by pretending that

his affliction did not exist. The Holy Ghost recorded their conditions in plain language. If acknowledging physical suffering were inherently a negative confession capable of defeating faith, the Scriptures would contain a remarkable collection of such confessions from their own inspired writers. The truth is much simpler. Acknowledging what is happening in the body does not require surrendering confidence in God. A faithful believer may describe his symptoms accurately while continuing to trust the Lord completely.

There is also an important distinction between hopeful expectation and dishonest testimony. A Christian may sincerely believe that God will help him through an illness and may even hope for extraordinary restoration. But if he publicly announces that a particular disease has disappeared, that declaration concerns an actual physical condition and should be supported by truthful evidence. Proverbs 12:22 declares, “Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.” Faith does not suspend that commandment. A man should not conceal worsening symptoms, deny a serious diagnosis, or abandon necessary medical care because somebody has instructed him to speak as though recovery had already occurred. When genuine improvement takes place, it can be acknowledged with thanksgiving. When suffering remains, it can be acknowledged without shame. The God of truth has never required His children to manufacture false testimony in order to defend His reputation.

5. The Confidence We Have in Him: According to His Will

First John 5:14 establishes the biblical foundation for confidence in prayer: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” The condition is stated plainly. Confidence rests upon asking according to God's will. The following verse declares that if believers know He hears them, they know they have the petitions desired of Him. These are wonderful promises, but they are not a blank cheque allowing fallen men to demand anything their imagination produces. The passage directs attention toward God's will, not human ambition. A Christian may pray earnestly for healing because the Lord possesses unlimited power and has demonstrated mercy throughout Scripture. But the general truth that God can heal does not reveal His specific intention concerning every illness. The believer must distinguish the certainty of God's ability from the absence of a particular promise guaranteeing the requested outcome.

Some attempt to escape that distinction by insisting that every petition offered with sufficient confidence must be granted exactly as requested. Such teaching turns prayer into a contest of human determination. If the desired result appears, the petitioner congratulates his faith. If it does not, somebody must be blamed for insufficient confidence. But First John places the matter under God's will, and the Lord's wisdom cannot be measured by whether a man receives everything he requests. James 4:3 warns

that some ask and receive not because they ask amiss, intending to consume the answer upon their lusts. Other requests may concern legitimate needs while still remaining subject to purposes God has not fully revealed. The believer is neither omniscient nor sovereign. He cannot know every consequence attached to the outcome he desires. That is why confidence in God must remain greater than confidence in the petitioner's preferred result.

Prayer should therefore be earnest, specific, and submissive. The Christian may ask God to remove disease, relieve suffering, guide physicians, make treatment effective, preserve life, and provide strength during recovery. He need not speak vaguely because he fears that an unanswered request will expose defective faith. Philippians 4:6 instructs believers to make their requests known unto God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. The following verse promises the peace of God guarding their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Notice that the peace is connected with bringing requests before the Lord, not with obtaining every requested outcome immediately. A man who entrusts his circumstances to God may experience peace even while waiting for an answer. The Lord remains faithful when circumstances improve, and He remains faithful when the road becomes harder. **Prayer is not the privilege of telling God what He must do; it is the privilege of bringing every need before the One who knows what He is doing.**

6. Not My Will, but Thine: The Prayer of Jesus Christ

Luke 22:41–42 records the Lord Jesus Christ withdrawing from His disciples about a stone's cast, kneeling down, and praying, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” There is no greater example of perfect submission than the sinless Son of God praying in Gethsemane. He knew the suffering before Him. He understood the approaching betrayal, condemnation, scourging, and crucifixion. Above all, He knew the dreadful burden associated with bearing the sins of mankind as the appointed sacrifice. His prayer was genuine, and His submission was absolute. The words “if thou be willing” did not reveal a defect in His faith. They expressed perfect obedience to the Father's will. Anyone who claims that submission to divine will constitutes unbelief has placed himself in the absurd position of correcting the prayer of Jesus Christ.

Luke 22:43–44 records an angel appearing from heaven to strengthen Him and describes His agony as He prayed more earnestly, His sweat being as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. The suffering was not imaginary, and the Lord did not pretend that the approaching cup was pleasant. Yet His submission remained complete. The Father did not remove the appointed sacrifice, because the redemption of sinners required the obedience of the Son unto death. Philippians 2:8 declares that Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The uniqueness of His

redemptive suffering must never be diminished by comparing it carelessly with ordinary human affliction. No Christian bears the sins of the world. No believer accomplishes substitutionary atonement through personal suffering. Nevertheless, the Lord's submission establishes the proper relationship between earnest petition and obedience to the Father's will.

The example becomes especially important when Christians confront circumstances they cannot change. A believer facing serious illness may pray repeatedly for restoration while acknowledging that the Lord possesses wisdom beyond his own understanding. He may seek appropriate treatment, request the prayers of the church, and continue asking for mercy without pretending that the outcome is already known. Submission does not require indifference. The Lord Jesus prayed earnestly in Gethsemane, and Paul pleaded three times concerning his thorn. Neither example supports the idea that faith must eliminate every expression of distress. The difference between rebellion and submission is not whether a man experiences pain or desires relief. It is whether he insists upon his own will against the revealed authority of God. The faithful servant may ask boldly while remaining willing to obey when the answer differs from what he hoped to receive.

7. Sufficient Grace When the Thorn Remains

Second Corinthians 12:7–10 provides a decisive correction to the belief that genuine faith always removes physical suffering. Paul had received extraordinary revelations and had exercised authentic apostolic authority, yet he testified concerning a thorn in the flesh, described as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. He pleaded with the Lord three times for its removal. This was not a man unfamiliar with prayer or lacking confidence in divine power. Paul had witnessed miraculous healings, endured persecution, and served Christ through extraordinary hardship. Yet the Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” The thorn remained, but divine grace supplied what Paul needed to endure it. That is not an example of failed faith. It is an example of faith receiving God's answer rather than demanding that God adopt the petitioner's preferred solution.

Paul continued, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” His rejoicing did not mean that the affliction had become physically pleasant. It meant that the spiritual purpose of God's answer had become clear. The weakness prevented self-exaltation and provided an occasion for Christ's strength to be manifested through His servant. Paul could be weak in the flesh and strong through the Lord at the same time. The same chapter that identifies the apostle's infirmities also establishes the sufficiency of divine grace. A modern teaching that declares continuing weakness incompatible with genuine faith cannot accommodate Paul's testimony without

explaining away the words. The apostle did not recover because he had discovered a method for creating the desired feeling. He continued serving because the Lord sustained him. Grace did not necessarily change the condition; it changed what the condition could accomplish against him.

This principle reaches into the ordinary responsibilities of the Christian life. A believer enduring chronic pain may continue worshipping, praying, witnessing, studying Scripture, caring for family, and serving others within the limits of his strength. Another may require extensive treatment or assistance with daily needs. Neither person becomes spiritually inferior merely because the body cannot perform as it once did. Second Corinthians 4:16 declares, “though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” The outward body remains subject to deterioration, but the inner life can be strengthened through fellowship with Christ. The believer should not glorify suffering itself, refuse legitimate relief, or pretend that weakness is enjoyable. He should glorify the Lord whose grace remains sufficient. **The measure of faith is not whether the thorn disappears, but whether the servant continues trusting the Saviour who permitted it to remain.**

The biblical distinction between fact, faith, and feeling protects the Christian from both presumption and despair. The facts concerning salvation rest upon the finished work of Jesus Christ and the written testimony of Scripture. Faith receives that testimony and trusts the Lord who cannot lie. Feelings may accompany faith, but they cannot establish doctrine or determine whether God remains faithful. Acts 8 records the Ethiopian eunuch hearing the Scriptures, receiving the testimony concerning Jesus Christ, believing, being baptized, and going on his way rejoicing. The rejoicing followed his response to divine truth; it did not create the truth he believed. The same order is essential when sickness enters the Christian home. A man should begin with what God has revealed, pray according to His will, and refuse to build his confidence upon a temporary emotional condition. The believer's assurance must be anchored to the Word, not tied to the changing weather of his feelings.

The false teaching that requires suffering Christians to deny physical reality must be confronted because it damages both doctrine and practical responsibility. A person experiencing serious symptoms should not conceal them to maintain an appearance of faith. A family facing a dangerous illness should not abandon necessary medical care because somebody has announced a recovery that has not occurred. A congregation should not accuse the afflicted of unbelief merely because prayer has not produced the desired result. Such conduct confuses human declarations with divine promises and places burdens upon people that Scripture does not impose. Christians should pray earnestly, seek appropriate treatment, exercise sound judgment, and speak truthfully

about their circumstances. If healing occurs, the Lord deserves thanksgiving. If suffering continues, His Word remains true. The believer does not have to invent a miracle to prove that God is faithful. The Almighty requires truth in the inward parts, not religious fiction in the outward testimony.

The final confidence of the Christian reaches far beyond the present condition of his body. Romans 8:23 declares that believers await "the redemption of our body," and Philippians 3:20–21 promises that the Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. First Corinthians 15 establishes the certainty of the resurrection and the transformation from corruption to incorruption. Those promises do not depend upon how healthy a believer feels today. They rest upon the finished work and resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Until that appointed day, the saved may experience weakness, disease, injury, and death, but none of these conditions can overturn the eternal salvation secured through the blood of the Saviour. The believer may face another painful night, another difficult diagnosis, or another season of waiting, yet his standing in Christ remains unchanged. **Faith does not need to pretend that the pain is gone. Faith knows that the promises of God remain when the pain is still there, and that the coming resurrection will accomplish what no earthly healing can make permanent.**

9 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – The Healing Industry: False Promises, Counterfeit Miracles, and Merchandise Made of the Sick

Key Passage: 2 Peter 2:1–3 (KJV)

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

There is something especially contemptible about a religious operation that discovers a man has cancer and immediately begins calculating how much money can be extracted from his desperation. The fellow may be frightened, his family may be exhausted, his savings may already be disappearing into medical bills, and his future may be terribly uncertain. Along comes a religious performer promising supernatural deliverance, provided the suffering man demonstrates sufficient faith, follows the proper instructions, and preferably contributes something substantial to the ministry. If the disease disappears, the

preacher receives the glory. If it remains, the patient receives the blame. That arrangement has all the advantages of a profitable business and none of the accountability of an honest one. Second Peter 2:3 describes the principle with dreadful precision: “through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” The Holy Ghost did not say these men would merely misunderstand an occasional passage. He exposed religious deception employed for financial gain. When the suffering become merchandise, the ministry has ceased to shepherd sheep and has begun counting them as inventory.

The Lord Jesus Christ never established a healing ministry requiring the sick to purchase access to divine mercy. When He cleansed lepers, restored sight, opened deaf ears, and raised the dead, His works demonstrated His identity as Israel's promised Messiah and the Son of God. He did not need theatrical lighting, exaggerated announcements, manipulated testimonies, or a collection of carefully selected ailments that could not be independently examined. The man born blind received sight. The lame man walked. Lazarus came out of the grave. The miracles possessed their own evidence because the One performing them possessed genuine authority. The apostles likewise performed extraordinary signs confirming their commission during the foundational period recorded in Acts. But the Scriptures never authorize every later preacher to claim apostolic powers merely because he can persuade an audience to believe his announcements. A claim to divine authority is not proof of divine authority. The counterfeit does not become genuine because somebody has decorated it with Bible verses.

The issue must be handled carefully because rejecting fraudulent claims is not the same as rejecting divine healing. God remains Almighty. He may answer prayer, restore health, preserve life, and intervene beyond the ability of physicians to explain. Christians should pray earnestly for the sick and rejoice whenever genuine recovery occurs. But the existence of real miracles in Scripture does not require accepting every modern miracle claim, any more than the existence of genuine apostles requires believing every man who calls himself one. Matthew 7 warns of false prophets appearing in sheep's clothing. Second Corinthians 11 exposes false apostles disguising themselves as ministers of righteousness. Second Thessalonians 2 warns of satanic signs and lying wonders. Second Peter 2 describes false teachers exploiting people through covetousness. These passages establish that religious deception is not a minor inconvenience to be politely overlooked. It is a spiritual danger that must be exposed by the Word of God, especially when the vulnerable are being manipulated in the name of Jesus Christ.

1. Wolves in Sheep's Clothing and Miracles That Prove Nothing

Matthew 7:15 contains the Lord's unmistakable warning: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” The historical

setting is the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus Christ was instructing His hearers concerning righteousness, the kingdom, and the dangers associated with false profession. The warning has particular significance in the prophetic program involving Israel, but its practical instruction concerning spiritual deception remains valuable to Christians. The Lord did not say that false prophets would always announce themselves with threatening appearances and openly wicked intentions. They would come disguised as sheep. Their outward presentation would resemble something harmless, respectable, and religious. That is precisely what makes deception dangerous. A wolf dressed like a wolf is comparatively easy to recognize. A wolf wearing a shepherd's coat can cause considerable damage before the flock realizes who has entered the enclosure.

Christ continued, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). The statement directs attention toward observable results rather than persuasive appearances. A teacher's doctrine, conduct, handling of money, treatment of vulnerable people, and response to biblical correction all deserve examination. A man may possess a pleasant personality, an impressive vocabulary, a large audience, and a reputation for extraordinary spiritual experiences while teaching serious error. Popularity is not an article of faith. Financial prosperity is not proof of divine approval. Religious enthusiasm is not evidence of sound doctrine. A congregation shouting itself hoarse does not transform false teaching into truth any more than a crowd cheering a dishonest merchant makes his scales accurate. Scripture provides the standard. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The Christian is responsible to examine what is preached rather than surrender his judgment to the person delivering it.

Matthew 7:22–23 delivers an even more startling warning. Christ declares that many will appeal to religious activities performed in His name, including prophecy, casting out devils, and wonderful works. Yet He will answer, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Notice that extraordinary religious claims do not establish a saving relationship with Christ. The Lord does not surrender His judgment merely because someone announces that miracles occurred. The passage must be interpreted within its kingdom setting, but its warning against trusting outward religious accomplishments is unmistakable. A modern preacher who builds his credibility entirely upon supposed supernatural demonstrations is standing upon very uncertain ground. The decisive question is whether his message agrees with Scripture and whether he truly knows the Lord. The greatest miracle claim in the world cannot replace salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ. A man may talk endlessly about healing bodies while remaining dangerously confused concerning the salvation of souls.

2. Simon the Sorcerer and the Attempt to Purchase God's Power

Acts 8 introduces Simon, a man who previously practiced sorcery in Samaria and bewitched the people, giving out that he himself was some great one. The population regarded him with extraordinary admiration, declaring, “This man is the great power of God” (Acts 8:10). That statement reveals how easily human beings can mistake an impressive religious performance for divine authority. Simon possessed a reputation, an audience, and the ability to astonish people. Yet Philip arrived preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and the people believed and were baptized. The contrast was enormous. Simon had attracted attention toward himself, while Philip preached the Lord Jesus Christ. The chapter belongs to the transitional history of Acts, when the gospel was moving outward from Jerusalem and extraordinary apostolic signs accompanied God's testimony. Its details must not be flattened into the later, fully revealed instruction concerning the Church.

Acts 8:13 records that Simon himself believed and was baptized, continuing with Philip and wondering as he witnessed miracles and signs. Later, Peter and John came from Jerusalem, prayed for the Samaritan believers, and laid hands upon them in connection with receiving the Holy Ghost. Simon observed what occurred and offered the apostles money, saying, “Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” There is the heart of his error. He saw a divine operation and attempted to purchase control over it. He treated supernatural authority as something obtainable through financial negotiation. Peter answered with a devastating rebuke: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20). The apostle did not provide Simon with a payment schedule, suggest a larger offering, or establish a preferred membership program for those seeking unusual powers.

Peter continued by declaring that Simon's heart was not right in the sight of God and commanding him to repent of his wickedness. The passage must be handled carefully concerning Simon's personal spiritual condition, since the narrative records his belief and baptism while also exposing the corruption of his motives. We need not pretend to possess knowledge beyond what Scripture establishes. His attempt to purchase spiritual power was wicked, and Peter condemned it. That is sufficient for the present subject. The lesson reaches directly into every religious operation that treats divine blessing as merchandise. If money could not purchase the apostolic administration of the Holy Ghost, it certainly cannot purchase God's obligation to cure a disease. A preacher who claims that a particular donation will release a promised miracle has introduced a financial condition that Scripture does not establish. The power of God is not a commodity, and Heaven does not operate a supernatural vending machine.

3. False Apostles, Deceitful Workers, and the Religious Disguise

Second Corinthians 11:13 identifies the danger without softening its language: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” Paul was not describing harmless differences of personality among sincere ministers. He was exposing men who misrepresented their authority and attempted to occupy positions God had not given them. The apostle defended his own ministry because the Corinthians were being influenced by those who appeared impressive while undermining the truth. His warning remains important wherever individuals claim extraordinary spiritual credentials. A title does not establish apostleship. An expensive building does not establish divine commission. A television audience does not furnish the signs of an apostle. Second Corinthians 12:12 identifies those signs as including wonders and mighty deeds wrought through Paul's genuine apostolic ministry. The biblical record supplies the standard against which claims of comparable authority must be examined.

Paul then explains why such deception should not surprise believers: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). The devil does not always advertise his work through openly repulsive wickedness. Deception becomes more effective when it resembles something righteous. Verse 15 warns that his ministers may likewise be transformed as ministers of righteousness. That is a serious statement concerning religious appearance. A man may speak frequently about Jesus, discuss miracles, display an open Bible, and express tremendous concern for the suffering while advancing doctrines that contradict the Scriptures. The appearance of compassion does not excuse deception. Neither does a claim of supernatural power place someone beyond examination. Paul commanded believers to recognize false apostles because spiritual authority must be tested against divine revelation. A counterfeit bearing the correct name remains counterfeit if it lacks the substance of the genuine article.

First Corinthians 12 also corrects the assumption that every believer should possess the same miraculous gifts. Paul asks whether all are apostles, whether all are workers of miracles, and whether all possess gifts of healing. The expected answer is no. God distributed gifts according to His own purpose, and the apostolic signs had a particular foundational function during the unfolding New Testament revelation. Ephesians 2:20 describes the household of God as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. A foundation is not laid anew every time somebody desires a larger religious platform. Modern claims of apostolic authority therefore require more than emotional enthusiasm and impressive advertising. God may heal in answer to prayer without granting the person praying the office or authority of an apostle. Confusing those truths opens the door to men who claim powers Scripture never assigned them.

4. False Christs, Lying Wonders, and the Coming Deception

Matthew 24:24 records Christ's solemn warning: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” The immediate context concerns the prophetic events surrounding the Tribulation and the Lord's Second Advent. Jesus was not providing an ordinary description of every religious meeting throughout the Church Age. He was warning of extraordinary deception associated with the coming period of trouble. Nevertheless, the principle is unmistakable: supernatural claims are not automatically proof of divine approval. The presence of something astonishing does not establish that its source is God. The devil is a deceiver, and religious deception may include extraordinary manifestations calculated to mislead those who do not properly understand the Scriptures. The Bible never instructs believers to abandon doctrinal discernment whenever someone announces that a miracle has occurred.

Second Thessalonians 2:9 describes the coming of the wicked one as being “after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” The passage continues by identifying deception among those who perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. The prophecy concerns the future revelation of the man of sin and the events associated with the day of Christ. The distinction between the Church's present calling and the prophetic program of the Tribulation must be preserved. Paul was not teaching that every unusual recovery occurring in the present age is satanic. That would be an unwarranted conclusion. He was demonstrating that signs and wonders can be employed within a system of deception and that the decisive issue remains the truth revealed by God. A person fascinated by supernatural claims but indifferent to Scripture is especially vulnerable to religious manipulation.

The warning extends beyond spectacular signs to the condition of the hearer's heart. Second Thessalonians 2:10 identifies those deceived as people who received not the love of the truth. Verse 12 speaks of those who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Deception flourishes where men desire an impressive experience more than sound doctrine. That does not mean every sick person seeking healing is spiritually careless; desperation may lead an honest sufferer to investigate extraordinary claims. The responsibility for deliberate deception remains with the deceiver. Yet Christians must learn that an exciting event cannot replace the authority of Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself warned against false signs, and Paul warned concerning lying wonders. A man who refuses to examine a healing claim because examination might disturb his excitement has placed his feelings above the Word. The truth does not become less true because a spectacle is more entertaining.

5. Through Covetousness Shall They Make Merchandise of You

Second Peter 2:1–3 identifies the financial motive behind a particular kind of religious deception. False teachers introduce destructive doctrines, attract followers, and cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Then Peter explains the mechanism: “through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” The expression describes people being exploited through fabricated or deceptive speech motivated by greed. That is not legitimate Christian giving. It is commercial manipulation operating under religious cover. When a preacher tells a frightened patient that a donation will demonstrate sufficient faith to guarantee healing, the claim must be examined against Scripture. If the promised financial condition has no biblical authority, the preacher has no right to impose it. The sufferer's desperation does not excuse the dishonesty. An offering does not purchase divine mercy, and no minister possesses authority to sell what God has not placed upon the market.

First Timothy 6:5 describes corrupt men “supposing that gain is godliness,” and Paul commands separation from such thinking. Verses 6–10 then establish the superiority of godliness with contentment and warn that the love of money is the root of all evil. The apostle does not condemn every possession or legitimate financial provision for ministry. He condemns covetousness and the spiritual destruction produced by making riches the object of life. A religious organization may properly require resources to support preaching, missions, teaching, and practical ministry. First Corinthians 9:14 establishes that those who preach the gospel may live of the gospel. But there is a world of difference between receiving voluntary support and promising supernatural outcomes in exchange for payment. Christian stewardship concerns freely supporting legitimate work. Religious extortion attaches spiritual threats or guaranteed blessings to a financial demand. One is an exercise of generosity; the other turns desperation into revenue.

Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” That passage destroys the spirit of manipulation surrounding compulsory offerings disguised as opportunities to purchase divine favour. The Christian is to give willingly, not because a religious personality threatens that withholding money will prevent a sick child from recovering. There is nothing cheerful about a frightened parent giving under the belief that refusal will condemn a loved one to continued suffering. Such pressure exploits conscience rather than encouraging generosity. Legitimate ministries should make truthful statements concerning their expenses and allow believers to give freely. They should not claim possession of divine knowledge concerning particular donations and miraculous outcomes without genuine authority from God. The gospel is free, the blood of Christ

cannot be purchased, and the mercy of the Almighty is not distributed according to the size of a contribution.

6. Healing Lines, Unverifiable Testimonies, and the Demand for Evidence

The biblical miracles provide an unmistakable standard for examining extraordinary claims. Acts 3 records a man lame from his mother's womb receiving immediate strength in his feet and ankle bones. He walked, leaped, and praised God before people who recognized him as the longtime beggar at the Beautiful gate. Acts 9 records Aeneas arising after eight years of confinement and Dorcas being restored from death. Matthew 8 records Jesus cleansing leprosy and healing those brought before Him. These were not mere reports of improved feelings following an emotional gathering. The changes were observable and consequential. When modern religious performers claim comparable miracles, honest examination is entirely appropriate. A claim that an incurable disease has vanished should be supported by reliable medical evidence when such evidence can reasonably be obtained. A testimony should not become immune to investigation merely because it was delivered from a platform surrounded by religious excitement.

Certain healing presentations create opportunities for confusion through suggestion, selective attention, dramatic gestures, and the excitement of a crowd. A person may report temporary relief without having experienced a cure. Another may possess a condition whose symptoms fluctuate naturally. Still another may misunderstand a diagnosis or the significance of an improvement. These possibilities do not prove that every testimony is fraudulent, but they demonstrate why extraordinary claims deserve careful examination. A responsible ministry should welcome truthful verification rather than treating every question as an attack upon God. If a condition genuinely improves, accurate documentation can establish what occurred. If the evidence remains uncertain, the proper response is honesty rather than exaggerated certainty. A man who cannot distinguish between a personal impression and a medically established recovery has no business guaranteeing that every report from his platform constitutes a miracle. Faith in God does not require believing every person who claims to represent Him.

The most dangerous practices arise when a claimed healing becomes grounds for abandoning necessary treatment. A person with a serious disease may be instructed to discontinue medication, avoid further examinations, or refuse emergency care because doing otherwise supposedly demonstrates unbelief. Such advice can produce grave consequences. Christians should never be pressured into ignoring dangerous symptoms or stopping prescribed treatment without appropriate medical guidance. A preacher does not acquire medical competence by placing his hand upon someone's head. Nor does religious enthusiasm provide the knowledge necessary to evaluate complex diseases. The

Lord may heal, and believers should pray earnestly, but responsible care remains important. Luke was identified as the beloved physician, and Paul recommended practical treatment for Timothy's recurring infirmities. The New Testament does not establish a war between prayer and medicine. A person who has experienced genuine improvement can thank God while allowing competent professionals to determine whether continued treatment remains necessary.

7. The Shepherd's Responsibility and the Suffering Saint

The proper Christian response to sickness is illustrated by the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ and the practical instruction of Scripture. James 5:14 directs the sick to call for the elders of the church and receive prayer in the name of the Lord. Although the epistle is explicitly addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, the passage demonstrates the seriousness with which believers should regard prayer for the afflicted. Luke 10 records the Samaritan binding the wounds of an injured traveller, providing transportation, and arranging continued care. These examples direct attention toward service rather than exploitation. The sick person needs compassion, prayer, practical assistance, and truthful counsel. He does not need to become a demonstration of a preacher's supposed greatness. A shepherd feeds and protects the sheep. He does not examine their weaknesses to determine how much money can be extracted from them.

Paul's own experience provides an important correction to the habit of blaming the unhealed. Second Corinthians 12 records his repeated prayers concerning the thorn in his flesh and the Lord's answer that sufficient grace would accompany continuing weakness. First Timothy 5:23 acknowledges Timothy's frequent infirmities, while Philippians 2:27 records Epaphroditus being sick nigh unto death. Second Timothy 4:20 states that Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. These men were faithful servants of Christ, not examples of spiritual failure. No preacher possesses authority to declare that a suffering believer's continued illness necessarily results from hidden sin or insufficient faith. The Bible records circumstances in which sickness followed divine judgment, but it also records suffering without the particular guilt religious accusers imagine. The afflicted should be encouraged to examine their lives honestly before God, not forced to invent transgressions to satisfy somebody else's theory.

The Church must therefore distinguish genuine spiritual ministry from religious performance. A faithful pastor should pray, teach sound doctrine, visit the suffering, encourage appropriate care, and refuse to exploit private desperation. Christian giving should remain voluntary and free from promises that money purchases miraculous favour. Extraordinary healing claims should be assessed honestly, and those offering them should not be permitted to evade reasonable questions by accusing everyone of unbelief.

Believers should also avoid the opposite error of rejecting every reported recovery merely because false teachers exist. The presence of counterfeit claims does not cancel God's power. It increases the responsibility to exercise discernment. First John 4:1 commands, “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” The Christian must neither surrender judgment to religious excitement nor surrender confidence in the Almighty because men have abused His name. Truthful discernment protects both the integrity of the gospel and the people who need its comfort.

The biblical warnings concerning false prophets, false apostles, lying wonders, and religious covetousness are not optional material reserved for unusually suspicious Christians. They belong to the inspired Word of God and must be preached wherever their instruction applies. Matthew 7 warns that religious appearance can conceal inward wickedness. Acts 8 demonstrates the corruption involved in attempting to purchase spiritual power. Second Corinthians 11 exposes deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. Second Thessalonians 2 warns of extraordinary deception associated with the coming man of sin. Second Peter 2 condemns those who make merchandise of people through covetousness and feigned words. First Timothy 6 exposes the destructive error of treating financial gain as proof of godliness. Taken together, these passages establish that religious deception may employ impressive claims, spiritual language, and financial manipulation while remaining fundamentally opposed to the truth. The believer's responsibility is to test doctrine by Scripture, examine conduct honestly, and refuse to confuse public excitement with divine approval.

At the same time, the exposure of false healing claims must never become an excuse for neglecting genuine suffering. The person facing a serious diagnosis is not merely an illustration in a theological argument. He is someone made in the image of God who deserves truthful counsel and practical compassion. The Christian should pray for healing without promising what God has not specifically revealed, offer help without attaching financial conditions, and encourage appropriate medical treatment without pretending that physicians possess unlimited power. If the Lord grants recovery, thanksgiving belongs to Him. If the illness continues, His people should continue ministering rather than withdrawing affection or assigning blame. There is nothing especially spiritual about a congregation celebrating dramatic testimonies while ignoring the quiet suffering of those who remain sick. The Lord Jesus Christ cared for the afflicted, and His servants should reflect that compassion through honest, faithful conduct. Love does not require accepting deception, and discernment does not require abandoning mercy.

The final judgment concerning religious fraud belongs to Almighty God, but the present responsibility of believers is already established. False doctrine must be confronted,

vulnerable people must be protected, and the gospel must never be converted into a financial transaction. Jesus Christ died for sinners, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Eternal salvation comes by grace through faith, not through purchasing an offering, attending a healing demonstration, or receiving the approval of a religious celebrity. The body still awaits its final redemption, and no earthly minister can guarantee that every disease will disappear before the resurrection. Yet the believer possesses a promise that reaches beyond every hospital, every graveyard, and every limitation of mortal flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ shall change the vile body of the redeemed and fashion it like unto His glorious body. That victory is secured through His finished work, not through the salesmanship of men. **The blood of Christ purchased redemption; no preacher has authority to put a price tag on the mercy it secured.**

10 of 10 – Healing and the Atonement – The Redemption of Our Body: The Healing That Death Cannot Defeat

Key Passage: Romans 8:23 (KJV)

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

There is a day coming when the last cancer cell in a redeemed body will disappear forever, when the last crippled saint will stand in immortal strength, when the last blind believer will open his eyes upon the glory of Jesus Christ, and when the last grave holding a member of the Body of Christ will surrender its prisoner. No physician will be summoned, no prescription will be required, no operating room will be prepared, and no preacher will need to announce another healing service. The Lord Jesus Christ will accomplish in a moment what every hospital, medicine, surgeon, and earthly miracle could never accomplish permanently. He will redeem the body from corruption itself. That is the great promise toward which every biblical discussion of healing must ultimately lead. The atonement of Jesus Christ was not accomplished merely to provide temporary relief from the discomforts of mortal existence. His blood purchased redemption, His resurrection demonstrated victory over death, and His coming will bring the bodily transformation of every born-again believer. **The greatest healing is not a sick man getting out of bed. It is a dead man getting out of the grave, never to die again.**

Romans 8:23 settles a controversy that has troubled churches, confused believers, and furnished dishonest religious performers with enough material to build entire enterprises

upon the suffering of others. Paul declares that Christians have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, yet they continue groaning within themselves while awaiting the redemption of their bodies. Notice that he includes himself. The apostle who performed extraordinary miracles, preached the gospel throughout the Roman world, and received revelations from the risen Christ did not announce that his present body had already entered the glorified condition promised at the resurrection. He said that believers were waiting. The same man who could heal others through apostolic authority experienced weakness in his own flesh. The same man who preached eternal security knew that his outward body remained subject to decay. There was no contradiction because Paul understood the difference between redemption already accomplished and redemption awaiting its appointed fulfillment. A man who cannot distinguish those two operations will eventually confuse salvation with physical health and the present dispensation with the resurrection.

The entire biblical record points toward this final victory. God healed under the Old Testament covenants, Jesus Christ demonstrated Messianic authority through extraordinary miracles, and the apostles performed signs confirming their foundational ministry. Believers were instructed to pray, suffering saints received sufficient grace, and Scripture acknowledged the legitimate use of medical treatment. False teachers were warned against making merchandise of desperate people, while genuine Christians were directed to trust the Word of God rather than their changing feelings. But none of those subjects provides the final answer to bodily corruption. Every temporary recovery leaves the possibility of another sickness, another injury, another painful decline, and ultimately another funeral. The resurrection ends that entire arrangement. Romans 8, First Corinthians 15, Second Corinthians 5, Philippians 3, and Revelation 21 present the glorious conclusion of a redemption that began with the finished work of Calvary and reaches forward into eternity. The cross purchased what no earthly physician can supply, and the resurrection guarantees what no earthly disease can destroy.

1. Groaning Within Ourselves: The Body Still Waiting for Redemption

Romans 8:18 begins with Paul's declaration, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The apostle does not deny that Christians suffer. He acknowledges suffering as part of their present experience and places it alongside the glory awaiting them. The distinction is between this present time and future revelation. Paul continues by describing the earnest expectation of the creature waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. The creation itself was made subject to vanity and remains in bondage to corruption. The effects of the fall extend throughout the present created order, where living things weaken, deteriorate, and die. Yet Paul announces a coming deliverance from that bondage. The Christian's

present condition is therefore not the final measure of God's redemptive purpose. What is presently subject to corruption will not remain so forever. The Lord has appointed an end to the groaning, and His appointment is more certain than tomorrow's sunrise.

Romans 8:22 declares, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Paul then includes believers in the same present experience: “even we ourselves groan within ourselves.” That expression should settle the foolish claim that bodily suffering proves a Christian has somehow missed the blessings of salvation. These are people who possess the firstfruits of the Spirit. They are not strangers to redemption or enemies of God. They have received the Holy Ghost, yet their bodies remain subject to infirmity. The presence of the Spirit does not mean the present flesh has become incorruptible. A saved man may experience failing eyesight, weakened hearing, damaged joints, chronic illness, or the gradual deterioration associated with age. None of those conditions cancels the new birth. The inward man may be renewed while the outward man perishes, precisely as Second Corinthians 4:16 declares. The Christian is not waiting to become saved; he is waiting for the body already purchased by Christ to receive its promised transformation.

The final words of Romans 8:23 identify exactly what believers await: “the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” The expression must not be confused with the believer's present position as a child of God. Romans 8:15 declares that Christians have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, “Abba, Father.” Romans 8:16 establishes that the Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are God's children. Yet verse 23 places the redemption of the body in the future. The relationship is already established, but the full bodily manifestation remains ahead. A son does not cease being his father's son because he has not yet received his inheritance. Neither does a Christian cease belonging to Christ because his mortal body still suffers. The difference between present possession and future completion is not a weakness in the promise. It is part of the promise itself. **The believer's name is already settled in Heaven, even while his body is still wearing out on earth.**

2. Bought With a Price: Redemption Accomplished and Redemption Awaited

First Corinthians 6:19–20 declares that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and that Christians are not their own, “For ye are bought with a price.” The purchase was accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. First Peter 1:18–19 identifies redemption as being secured not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. That purchase is complete. The Lord did not make a down payment at Calvary and leave the remaining balance for sinners to provide through good works, religious ceremonies, or physical

endurance. Hebrews 10:14 declares, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Salvation rests upon the finished work of the Saviour. Yet the fact that the body belongs to Christ by purchase does not mean that its future transformation has already occurred. Ownership and completed renovation are not identical. The Lord owns what He has not yet glorified.

Ephesians 1:13–14 explains the present relationship between salvation and future inheritance. After hearing the word of truth and believing the gospel of salvation, Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” There is the divine order. The believer hears, believes, receives the Spirit, and possesses the earnest of an inheritance whose complete realization remains future. The Holy Spirit is not an uncertain promise that God may withdraw whenever the Christian experiences sickness. He is the earnest of what the Lord has pledged to complete. Ephesians 4:30 likewise declares that believers are sealed “unto the day of redemption.” A redeemed soul housed in a mortal body is not an example of salvation failing halfway through the operation. It is a Christian living between the completed sacrifice of Calvary and the appointed transformation of the resurrection. God has not misplaced the remainder of the inheritance.

Second Corinthians 5:1 gives another magnificent description: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Paul describes the mortal body as an earthly tabernacle, a temporary dwelling subject to dissolution. He does not pretend that physical deterioration is imaginary or that genuine believers never face death. Instead, he directs attention toward the eternal provision of God. Verses 2–4 describe believers groaning and longing to be clothed upon with their house from Heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Verse 5 identifies God as the One who has wrought believers for this very thing and given the earnest of the Spirit. The provision is divine from beginning to end. The Christian does not manufacture a resurrection body through positive confession. He receives it through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. No earthly manufacturer has ever offered a warranty approaching that promise.

3. Sown in Corruption, Raised in Incorruption

First Corinthians 15:42–44 presents the resurrection of the redeemed body with extraordinary precision. Paul declares, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” These four contrasts reveal the tremendous difference between the present mortal condition and the future glorified body. Corruption gives way to incorruption, dishonour to glory, weakness to power, and the

natural body to the spiritual body. The apostle is not describing a temporary recovery following an illness. He is describing resurrection. The body placed in the grave is subject to decay, but the body raised through Christ's power will never again enter that condition. The transformation is complete, permanent, and beyond every limitation of earthly medicine. A physician may help a diseased organ function more effectively, but no physician has ever produced an incorruptible body.

The expression “spiritual body” must not be twisted into the notion that the believer becomes a disembodied spirit floating through eternity. Paul explicitly says that a body is raised. The distinction concerns the nature and condition of that body, not the disappearance of bodily existence. The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the reality of His own body after rising from the dead. In Luke 24:39 He declared, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” He subsequently ate before His disciples, and John 20 records Thomas being invited to examine the wounds associated with the crucifixion. Christ was not a ghost produced by the imagination of grieving followers. He had risen bodily from the grave. The believer's resurrection likewise concerns genuine bodily life, gloriously transformed by divine power. The Christian is not looking forward to becoming less than human, but to receiving what God has promised beyond the corruption of fallen flesh.

First Corinthians 15:45–49 contrasts the first Adam with the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from Heaven. Through Adam came the condition associated with sin, mortality, and death. Through Christ comes the resurrection life promised to those who belong to Him. Paul concludes, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” There is the promise. The believer presently carries the marks of Adam's fallen race in a body subject to weakness and death. But that condition is not permanent. The Lord Jesus Christ will transform His redeemed people according to the power of His resurrection. The old body may require spectacles, medicine, surgery, or assistance merely to accomplish ordinary tasks. The glorified body will require none of those things. **Adam's inheritance brought mankind to the grave; Christ's inheritance brings the redeemed out of it.**

4. The Last Trump and the Transformation of the Church

First Corinthians 15:51 introduces a mystery: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” The apostle is revealing something concerning the resurrection and transformation of believers that had not previously been disclosed in this fullness. Not every Christian will experience physical death before the Lord comes for His Church. Some will remain alive, yet every member of Christ's Body will require

transformation. Verse 52 identifies the astonishing speed of the event: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” The dead will be raised incorruptible, and living believers will be changed. This is not a gradual improvement brought about by better nutrition, medical discoveries, or extended human development. It is the instantaneous operation of Almighty God. The redeemed will not spend centuries becoming progressively less corruptible. In a moment, Christ will accomplish what human effort could never accomplish in a million years.

First Thessalonians 4:16–17 provides the accompanying description. The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and living believers shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The passage concerns the gathering of the Church to Christ, not the establishment of an earthly medical kingdom through human effort. The order is deliberate. The Lord descends, the dead in Christ rise, and living saints are caught up with them. Paul concludes that believers shall ever be with the Lord. The event also demonstrates the difference between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Advent when Christ returns to establish His promised reign upon earth. First Thessalonians 4 concerns believers meeting Christ in the air; Zechariah 14 describes His feet standing upon the Mount of Olives. Those prophetic events must not be confused merely because both concern His coming.

The distinction between Israel and the Church remains essential. God has not cancelled His promises concerning Israel's national restoration, the throne of David, or the future Millennial Kingdom. Romans 11:25–29 establishes that Israel's present blindness is partial and temporary and that God's gifts and calling are without repentance. The Church's gathering to Christ does not transform Israel into a discarded nation or erase its prophetic inheritance. Neither should the resurrection promises given to the Body of Christ be confused with the later resurrection and judgment scenes associated with the prophetic program. First Corinthians 15 and First Thessalonians 4 establish the blessed hope of the Church, whose members are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ. When the Lord calls His people, the weakest believer will not be left behind because he failed to recover from an illness. Every saved member of the Body will be changed. The Rapture is not a reward reserved for healthy Christians. It is the promised gathering of Christ's redeemed people.

5. Fashioned Like Unto His Glorious Body

Philippians 3:20–21 declares, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to

subdue all things unto himself." That is one of the clearest promises of bodily transformation anywhere in the Pauline epistles. Notice the subject of the operation. The Lord Jesus Christ shall change the body. The believer does not change himself, and no religious performer accomplishes the transformation by laying hands upon him. The same Saviour who redeemed the soul through His blood possesses the power necessary to transform the body. Paul calls the present body vile, emphasizing the lowly and corruptible condition in which believers presently live. The expression does not mean that physical existence itself is evil. It identifies the condition from which the redeemed body must be delivered.

The promise that the believer's body will be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body reaches beyond anything earthly medicine can offer. The resurrected Saviour is no longer subject to death. Romans 6:9 declares, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." That is the condition toward which the believer's bodily redemption points. Every earthly treatment remains temporary because the present body is mortal. The glorified body will never require another operation to correct a failing organ or another prescription to relieve a recurring disease. The Lord will not merely improve the body's present condition. He will transform it according to His own glorious pattern. First John 3:2 declares that when Christ shall appear, believers shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. The promise concerns the future manifestation of God's children and the transformation accompanying their hope in Christ.

There is a remarkable difference between the restoration of Lazarus and the resurrection glory awaiting the Church. Lazarus came out of his tomb in John 11 after being dead four days, demonstrating Christ's authority over death. Yet Lazarus returned to mortal life and eventually faced death again. The widow's son raised at Nain likewise received an extension of earthly existence, not the final glorification promised to the redeemed. Those miracles were extraordinary, but they were temporary restorations. Christ's own resurrection belongs to an entirely different order. He rose never to die again, and believers will share in the victory secured through Him. A man who has received an earthly healing may still require another physician ten years later. The glorified saint will never again be admitted to a hospital. **The difference between a miracle of recovery and the resurrection of glory is the difference between postponing death and abolishing its power forever.**

6. O Death, Where Is Thy Sting? The Final Enemy Defeated

First Corinthians 15:54–57 declares the triumphant conclusion of bodily redemption: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which

giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The victory belongs to Christ, not to human strength or religious accomplishment. Death entered the human experience through sin, as Romans 5:12 explains, and the law exposes the guilt of transgression. No amount of medical progress can remove the spiritual cause of mankind's condemnation. The physician may treat the body, but he cannot justify the sinner before God. The Lord Jesus Christ accomplished redemption through His substitutionary death and resurrection. When the believer receives the promised incorruptible body, the victory purchased at Calvary will be manifested in the very flesh that once experienced weakness and mortality. The grave will surrender what Christ has redeemed.

First Corinthians 15:26 identifies death as the last enemy to be destroyed. The statement belongs within Paul's broader explanation of resurrection, Christ's reign, and the ultimate subjection of all things under divine authority. Death is not presented as a harmless companion or an ordinary friend of mankind. It is an enemy. The Christian may possess confidence concerning what follows physical death, but that confidence does not require pretending that death itself is good. The Lord Jesus Christ wept at the tomb of Lazarus, even though He was about to raise him. Scripture does not command believers to celebrate the suffering associated with mortality as though pain and bereavement were pleasant. It promises their eventual defeat. The body that now grows tired, struggles against disease, and approaches the grave will ultimately be delivered from the dominion of corruption. God has not merely promised to make death more comfortable. He has promised to conquer it.

Revelation 20:14 records the final judgment upon death itself: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." This event belongs to the conclusion of God's prophetic judgment program and must be distinguished from the earlier catching up of the Church. The passage follows the Millennial Kingdom and the Great White Throne judgment, where the dead are judged according to their works and those not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. The Great White Throne is not the Judgment Seat of Christ, where believers' service is evaluated. Confusing those judgments destroys important distinctions concerning salvation and eternal destiny. The final abolition of death in the eternal order does not mean that unbelievers receive universal salvation. Scripture identifies the second death as a dreadful reality. But for the redeemed, physical death will never again threaten their glorified existence. The last enemy will be destroyed, and the victory of Jesus Christ will stand forever.

7. No More Death, No More Pain, and No More Need for Healing

Revelation 21:1–4 carries the redeemed beyond the present creation into the eternal order. John declares that he saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first

earth were passed away. He then saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The passage follows the final judgment recorded in Revelation 20 and must not be confused with the present Church Age or the thousand-year reign of Christ described earlier. God announces His dwelling with men, and John records the glorious promise that He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. The reason is not merely that suffering people will be comforted while their diseases continue. The conditions producing those sorrows will have passed away. Death, mourning, crying, and pain will belong to the former order. Eternity will not be a longer version of the present world with better hospitals.

Revelation 21:4 declares, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Consider the absolute nature of those words. No more death means death will never again interrupt the fellowship of the redeemed. No more sorrow means the afflictions and losses belonging to the former order will no longer produce mourning. No more crying and no more pain mean the redeemed will not spend eternity enduring the limitations of corruptible flesh. The Lord is not promising occasional relief between recurring seasons of suffering. He is announcing the permanent removal of the conditions that have troubled mankind since the fall. No saint will awaken in the eternal state wondering whether another disease has returned. No family will gather around a hospital bed preparing for another funeral. The former things will have passed away because Almighty God has established something new.

The promise also exposes the absurdity of reducing the accomplishments of Christ's atonement to immediate earthly prosperity and guaranteed present health. The blood of Jesus Christ secures something infinitely greater than a temporary improvement in the mortal body. The believer's salvation is already established through faith in the finished work of Christ, but the resurrection and final eternal order reveal the fullness of the victory awaiting the redeemed. The Millennium will manifest Christ's righteous government and the fulfillment of God's promises concerning Israel, while the eternal state follows the final defeat of Satan, the last judgment, and the removal of the former creation. Each event belongs in its proper prophetic setting. The Christian should rejoice in the certainty of final bodily redemption without moving the eternal state backward into the present age. **The Bible does not promise that every Christian will avoid the hospital today. It promises an eternal condition in which hospitals will never again be necessary.**

The biblical doctrine of healing begins with the authority of Almighty God and ends with the complete redemption of His people. Under the Old Testament covenants, God demonstrated His power to afflict, restore, preserve, and heal according to His revealed

purposes. During the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, miraculous healings confirmed His identity as Israel's promised Messiah and displayed the authority of the coming King. In Acts, extraordinary signs accompanied the foundational testimony of the apostles. Yet Scripture also records faithful servants suffering physical infirmities, receiving practical medical care, and praying for relief that did not always come in the manner requested. Those passages do not contradict the power of God. They demonstrate that His power remains subject to His wisdom and purposes rather than human demands. The atonement secures the believer's ultimate deliverance from sin and corruption, but the timing of that bodily deliverance belongs to the Lord. A promise is not weakened because God has appointed its fulfillment for a future day.

The Christian therefore has every reason to pray earnestly for healing while refusing the false promises of religious performers who claim authority God has not given them. A believer may seek competent medical treatment, acknowledge physical limitations, and admit continuing pain without surrendering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sick saint is not spiritually inferior merely because the disease remains. The aged believer is not abandoned because his strength diminishes. The faithful servant who dies before receiving physical relief has not necessarily suffered a failure of faith. His salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ, and his future resurrection rests upon the power of the One who conquered the grave. When the Lord calls His Church, every redeemed body will be transformed. No hidden illness, advanced age, physical disability, or mortal weakness will prevent the Saviour from accomplishing what He promised. The Christian's confidence is not in the present condition of his flesh but in the unchanging faithfulness of the risen Lord.

The final triumph belongs to Jesus Christ, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. His resurrection is the foundation of the believer's hope, and His coming will accomplish the bodily transformation that no earthly physician can provide. The body sown in weakness will be raised in power. The body sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption. The mortal will put on immortality, and the redeemed will bear the image of the heavenly. Beyond the resurrection lies the final eternal order, where God Himself declares that death, sorrow, crying, and pain shall be no more. Every genuine healing experienced in this life is temporary, but the glorification promised through Christ is permanent. Every hospital discharge remains subject to another illness, and every earthly recovery remains subject to another funeral. But the resurrected believer will never again surrender his body to the grave. **The greatest healing is not when a dying man receives a few more years. It is when Jesus Christ raises that man beyond the reach of death forever. Calvary purchased that victory, the empty tomb guaranteed it, and the coming of the Lord will bring it to pass.**

Conclusion – Healing and the Atonement: Faith, Medicine, Miracles, and False Promises

When the final word has been spoken, the last argument has been examined, and every passage concerning divine healing has been placed back into its proper biblical setting, one tremendous truth stands above all the religious confusion: **the Lord Jesus Christ did not shed His blood merely to make dying men comfortable. He shed His blood to redeem sinners and ultimately deliver their bodies from the power of death itself.** That is the glorious destination of this entire study. The LORD who declared Himself the God who heals has never lost His authority over the human body. The Saviour who cleansed lepers, opened blind eyes, restored crippled limbs, and called dead men from their graves remains the same Almighty God. His power has not diminished because the apostolic age has passed into history. His sovereignty has not weakened because a Christian experiences sickness. His faithfulness has not failed because an earnest prayer receives an answer different from the one requested. The question was never whether God could heal. The question was whether men would permit God to determine when, how, and according to what promises He would exercise that power. Scripture has answered the question. The Lord is sovereign, His Word is sufficient, and His purposes are not subject to revision by religious excitement.

We began with the LORD's declaration to Israel in Exodus 15:26, “I am the LORD that healeth thee.” That statement revealed divine authority over sickness, but it appeared within God's particular dealings with a nation delivered from Egypt and instructed concerning covenant obedience. Miriam's leprosy demonstrated that God could afflict and restore. The brazen serpent demonstrated His power to preserve life through an appointed means. Naaman's cleansing revealed that divine mercy was not limited by human importance, national identity, or the expectations of a proud military commander. Hezekiah's recovery demonstrated that God could answer prayer, extend life, and employ a physical remedy without surrendering His supernatural authority. Job's suffering exposed the dangerous assumption that every afflicted person must have committed some hidden wickedness. These accounts cannot be honestly reduced to one mechanical formula. God worked differently in different circumstances, and the inspired record preserved those distinctions for a reason. A man who collects the miracles while discarding their historical settings has not discovered a deeper doctrine of healing. He has simply gathered the blessings he likes while leaving the rest of the Bible lying on the table.

When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared among Israel, the healing miracles took on extraordinary prophetic significance. The blind received sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard, lepers were cleansed, and the dead were raised. These works were not

performances designed to attract religious customers. They were manifestations of the authority of Israel's promised Messiah. Matthew 4:23 records that Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom while healing all manner of sickness and disease. Isaiah 35 had foretold miraculous restoration associated with the coming deliverance of God, and Matthew 11 records Jesus directing John the Baptist to the very works that testified concerning His identity. The King had appeared, and His miracles furnished evidence that the promises of the prophets were no religious fairy tale. Yet Israel's leaders rejected Him despite the testimony standing before their eyes. Religious unbelief has always possessed the peculiar ability to demand evidence, receive evidence, and then become furious because the evidence contradicts its preferred conclusion. Christ did not fail to demonstrate His authority. Men failed to receive the One whose authority had been demonstrated. His earthly miracles confirmed His identity, but they did not establish an unconditional guarantee that every Christian throughout the present age would experience immediate physical restoration.

The Acts of the Apostles carried that testimony forward through extraordinary signs accompanying the foundational apostolic ministry. Peter commanded the man crippled from birth to rise, and the fellow went walking and leaping through the temple. Aeneas arose after eight years of confinement. Dorcas returned from death. Paul healed a cripple at Lystra, and God performed special miracles through him at Ephesus. These events were genuine demonstrations of divine power, not examples of religious imagination elevated into supposedly supernatural experience. Second Corinthians 12:12 identifies signs, wonders, and mighty deeds as credentials of apostleship, while Hebrews 2:3–4 explains that God confirmed the testimony of His chosen witnesses through extraordinary works according to His own will. Acts records a transitional period in which the gospel moved outward from Jerusalem and the complete doctrinal revelation concerning the Church was being established. Confusing that historical setting with the ordinary responsibilities of every later Christian minister produces doctrinal disorder. The Church has been instructed to preach the gospel, teach sound doctrine, pray, evangelize, and care for the afflicted. It has not been authorized to manufacture new apostles merely because somebody has discovered that claiming supernatural authority can attract a crowd.

At the center of the controversy stood Isaiah's declaration, “with his stripes we are healed.” Those words deserve reverence, careful examination, and complete submission to their biblical context. Isaiah 53 reveals the suffering Servant wounded for transgressions, bruised for iniquities, chastised for peace, and bearing the sins of the guilty. The LORD laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Matthew 8:16–17 applies the prophetic language concerning infirmities and sicknesses to the actual healing ministry of Jesus Christ, while First Peter 2:24–25 identifies the bearing of sins upon the tree and the restoration of

wandering sheep to their Shepherd. Romans 8 then establishes that Christians who already possess the Holy Spirit continue awaiting the redemption of their bodies. There is no contradiction among these passages. The contradiction appears when somebody insists that the accomplished sacrifice of Calvary requires every physical consequence of corruption to disappear immediately. The atonement secures the believer's complete redemption, but Scripture distinguishes salvation already possessed from bodily transformation still awaiting fulfillment. **The blood of Christ has already purchased the victory, but the believer has not yet received everything that victory guarantees.**

That distinction exposes the fundamental weakness of the doctrine promising every Christian immediate physical healing through sufficient faith. If the redeemed body must already be free from every infirmity, why does Romans 8 describe saved people groaning within themselves? Why does First Corinthians 15 describe a body that must yet be changed from corruption to incorruption? Why does Philippians 3:21 promise that the Lord shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body? And why do faithful New Testament believers continue experiencing bodily weakness after receiving salvation? The answers cannot be supplied by accusing every suffering Christian of unbelief. The Bible itself establishes the future redemption of the body. A man may possess everlasting life while suffering from a disease that eventually takes his earthly life. His illness does not cancel his justification, remove the Holy Spirit, or overturn the finished work of Jesus Christ. Eternal security rests upon the Saviour, not the condition of the saved man's bloodstream. The redeemed are not awaiting another sacrifice for sin. They are awaiting the bodily transformation secured through the sacrifice already accomplished.

The apostle Paul provides a particularly devastating answer to the religious theory that every genuine believer must receive immediate physical healing. Here was a man who possessed authentic apostolic authority, performed extraordinary miracles, endured persecution, and received revelations beyond ordinary human experience. Yet he pleaded three times with the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh, and the Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Timothy experienced frequent infirmities and stomach trouble. Epaphroditus became sick nigh unto death. Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. These were not spiritual failures gathered together for a special lesson in unbelief. They were faithful servants engaged in the work of Jesus Christ. Their conditions were recorded by the Holy Ghost, who evidently saw no danger in admitting that saved people sometimes remain physically afflicted. Paul did not announce that his salvation had failed because the thorn remained. He learned that Christ's strength could be manifested through continuing weakness. **A man may be too weak to stand without assistance and still possess stronger faith than the fellow standing over him demanding another miracle.**

The biblical instruction concerning prayer must likewise be preserved without being turned into an attempt to dictate terms to Almighty God. James 5 directs the sick to seek prayer, while Elijah's example demonstrates that earnest prayer can accomplish much through the power of the Lord. Mark 9 records a desperate father crying, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” First John 5:14 establishes confidence in petitions offered according to God's will. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself prayed in Gethsemane, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” These passages do not weaken the importance of prayer. They establish its proper foundation. Christians should pray boldly for healing, seek the prayers of faithful believers, and thank God for every genuine restoration. But a petitioner does not become sovereign merely because his request is earnest. Prayer is not a weapon for forcing the Almighty to surrender His authority. The Lord may grant immediate recovery, permit gradual improvement, provide strength through continuing illness, or bring the believer through suffering toward the end of earthly life. His wisdom remains greater than the limited understanding of the person asking.

The false conflict between faith and medicine must also be rejected. Paul called Luke “the beloved physician.” Jesus Christ acknowledged that the sick need a physician. The Good Samaritan treated wounds, provided transportation, and arranged continuing care. Isaiah instructed that a lump of figs be applied to Hezekiah's boil. Paul recommended a practical remedy concerning Timothy's recurring physical complaints. These passages establish that the use of appropriate physical treatment does not inherently contradict dependence upon God. A Christian facing illness should pray, seek competent medical care, make responsible decisions, and acknowledge the Lord throughout the process. Physicians remain fallible, treatments sometimes fail, and no medical professional possesses authority over life and death comparable to the Creator. Yet those limitations do not make responsible treatment sinful. A man who refuses necessary assistance merely to impress somebody with his supposed faith has confused recklessness with spirituality. The LORD does not need a Christian to endanger himself in order to prove that Heaven possesses supernatural power. Proper medical care and earnest prayer can stand together without either becoming a substitute for God.

The distinction between biblical faith and emotional feeling has been equally important throughout this study. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith rests upon divine revelation, not upon the intensity of human expectation. A Christian may believe with absolute certainty that God can heal while not knowing whether the Lord intends to remove a particular affliction immediately. That is not unbelief. It is an acknowledgment that God's revealed promises must not be enlarged through human imagination. Feelings change. Pain increases and decreases. Medical conditions improve or worsen. The believer may rejoice one day and struggle

through discouragement the next. None of those circumstances alters the truth of the gospel. A person should never be instructed to conceal symptoms, deny a diagnosis, or announce a miraculous recovery that has not occurred. The God of truth does not require false testimony to defend His reputation. If healing has genuinely taken place, let the evidence establish it and the Lord receive the glory. If suffering remains, let the believer speak truthfully while continuing to trust the Saviour. Faith does not require pretending that the body is healthy when it is not.

Then there is the disgraceful exploitation of human suffering by religious performers who make merchandise of the desperate. Second Peter 2:3 warns that false teachers employ covetousness and feigned words to exploit people. Acts 8 records Simon the sorcerer attempting to purchase spiritual power and receiving a severe rebuke. Second Corinthians 11 exposes deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. Matthew 7 warns of wolves concealed beneath sheep's clothing. These passages were not written to decorate an occasional sermon on discernment. They reveal the danger of religious deception operating behind spiritual language and impressive appearances. No preacher possesses authority to promise healing in exchange for money. No minister may guarantee that a donation will release a miracle. No supposed healer should escape honest examination by accusing every questioner of unbelief. The sick deserve compassion and truthful counsel, not commercial pressure disguised as divine instruction. **When a preacher turns another man's suffering into a financial opportunity, he has stopped feeding the sheep and started selling them.** The Lord will not overlook the misuse of His name merely because the offender conducted the transaction beneath a religious banner.

Nevertheless, the exposure of false doctrine must never become an excuse for hardheartedness toward the afflicted. It is possible to expose a counterfeit healing ministry and still neglect the person who desperately needs assistance. It is possible to preach correctly about dispensations and yet fail miserably in ordinary Christian charity. The wounded traveller in Luke 10 did not benefit from the priest and Levite walking past him. The Samaritan demonstrated compassion by stopping, treating his wounds, and providing continuing care. The Christian should do likewise wherever genuine needs arise. Pray with the suffering. Help families obtain appropriate assistance. Visit those who are confined to their homes. Encourage the elderly whose strength has diminished. Support the believer who must continue serving Christ through physical limitations. And never turn another person's disease into an opportunity to display superior spirituality. The Lord Jesus Christ did not command His servants to investigate every sick man for imaginary hidden sins. He commanded His people to love one another. Truth without charity can become a weapon in the hands of a proud man, while charity without truth may leave the suffering exposed to deception. Both must remain governed by Scripture.

But the entire discussion would remain incomplete if it ended with earthly sickness, prayer, medicine, or even miraculous restoration. Every person healed during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ eventually faced mortality. Lazarus came out of the grave, but his restoration did not make him immortal. Hezekiah received fifteen additional years, but those years eventually expired. The cripple at the Beautiful gate walked and leaped, but his body remained subject to the ordinary limitations of fallen flesh. Every earthly recovery is temporary because the present body has not yet received the promised transformation. Romans 8:23 declares that Christians await "the redemption of our body." First Corinthians 15 announces that the corruptible shall put on incorruption and the mortal shall put on immortality. Philippians 3:20–21 promises that the Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body. There is the final answer to the doctrine of healing. God has promised something infinitely greater than an extension of mortal life. He has promised the resurrection and glorification of the redeemed.

When the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His Church, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and living believers shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, according to First Thessalonians 4:16–17. First Corinthians 15:51–52 declares that believers shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. That transformation will not depend upon the physical condition of the believer when the trumpet sounds. The Christian confined to a bed will not require assistance to answer the call. The saint whose earthly eyes have long been darkened will not need another pair of glasses. The believer whose body has weakened through decades of disease will not be left behind because his strength has failed. The Saviour who purchased the body will transform it by His power. This is the blessed hope of the Church and must be distinguished from the later Second Advent when Christ returns to establish His promised kingdom upon earth. God's covenant promises concerning Israel remain secure, and the prophetic events of the Tribulation, Second Advent, Millennium, and eternal state must be understood in their proper order. But the Church's promise is already certain: the Lord Himself will gather His redeemed people and change their mortal bodies into the likeness of His glorious body.

Beyond the resurrection and the Millennial reign, Revelation 21 presents the eternal order in which the former things have passed away. John declares, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Consider the absolute certainty and completeness of those words. No more death means the grave will never again interrupt the fellowship of the redeemed. No more sorrow means the afflictions and losses that burden the present life will no longer produce mourning. No more crying and no more pain mean that the glorified saint will never again experience the suffering associated with corruptible flesh. This is not a temporary healing service followed by another appointment six months later. It is the final

triumph of redemption. The best physician on earth can only work within the limitations of mortal existence. The risen Saviour will remove those limitations forever. No hospital can offer that promise, no medicine can produce it, and no religious performer can manufacture it. It belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose resurrection power guarantees the ultimate victory.

And this brings us to the question that matters more than every argument concerning healing: Have you been born again? A man may recover from cancer, receive perfect eyesight, regain the use of his legs, and enjoy another fifty years of earthly life while remaining lost and on his way to Hell. Physical healing does not forgive sins. A restored body does not justify the soul. A miracle does not substitute for the blood of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares the gospel that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation comes by grace through faith, not by works. Romans 10:9–13 directs sinners to believe upon and call upon the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest need of every human being is reconciliation to God through the finished work of His Son. A healthy unbeliever possesses nothing that can purchase eternal life, while a dying believer possesses a salvation that death itself cannot destroy. The condition of the body does not determine the eternal destiny of the soul. What matters is whether the sinner has received the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let the healing industry keep its exaggerated promises, its theatrical performances, and its attempts to place Almighty God beneath the authority of human declarations. Let the skeptics continue pretending that the Creator who formed the human body has somehow become incapable of repairing it. The Bible believer has no need to join either camp. We believe that God heals because the Scriptures say He heals. We believe that Christians should pray because the Scriptures command prayer. We believe that appropriate medicine has a legitimate place because the Scriptures acknowledge practical treatment. We believe that suffering may remain because the Scriptures record faithful saints enduring bodily infirmity. We believe that the atonement secures complete redemption because the Scriptures proclaim the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. And we believe that every born-again member of the Body of Christ will receive a glorified body because the risen Lord has promised it. **The final word concerning healing does not belong to the physician, the preacher, the disease, or the grave. It belongs to Jesus Christ, who declared in Revelation 1:18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."** The Great Physician will accomplish the final cure, the last enemy will be defeated, and the redeemed will never need healing again. That is the triumph of the atonement, the certainty of the resurrection, and the promise that no sickness, no suffering, and no grave can ever overturn.

Healing and the Atonement

Faith, Medicine, Miracles, and False Promises

A Bible Study in Ten Parts

The Scriptures • The Atonement • Prayer • Medicine
Suffering • False Promises • The Final Redemption

1 THE LORD THAT HEALETH



- God healed under Israel's covenants and revealed Himself as the God who heals.
- Miriam's leprosy, the brazen serpent, Naaman's cleansing, Hezekiah's recovery, and Job's restoration demonstrate His power.

Ex. 15:26; Num. 12; Num. 21; 2 Ki. 5; Isa. 38

2 THE GREAT PHYSICIAN



- Jesus' earthly kingdom ministry included real healings that fulfilled Messianic prophecy.
- His miracles revealed Him as Israel's promised Messiah and the compassionate Physician.

Matt. 4:23-24; 8:16-17; Isa. 35:5-6

3 SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE



- Peter and Paul authenticated their ministry through real, observable miracles.
- These signs, wonders, and mighty deeds confirmed the word of God and the apostolic commission.

Acts 3; Acts 9; Acts 14; Acts 19; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4

4 BY HIS STRIPES



- Christ bore our sins and iniquities, and His stripes secure redemption.
- Contrast the actual physical healings in Matthew 8 with the spiritual restoration described by Peter.

Isa. 53:5-6; Matt. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:24-25

5 PRAYER FOR THE SICK



- The sick are to call for the elders, receive prayer, and be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord.
- Prayer should be offered in faith and according to God's will, not as a device to force His hand.

James 5:14-16; 1 John 5:14

NOW: Salvation by grace; Spirit sealed; mortal body still groans.
ROMANS 8:23

THEN: Body raised incorruptible; fashioned like Christ; death defeated.
1 CORINTHIANS 15:52

6 PAUL AND THE SICK SAINTS



- Paul's thorn in the flesh remained after three prayers, with the Lord's answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."
- Timothy's infirmities, Epaphroditus's sickness, and Trophimus being left sick show faithful servants still suffered.

2 Cor. 12:7-10; Phil. 2:27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20

7 FAITH AND MEDICINE



- Luke is identified as the beloved physician, showing the legitimate place of medicine.
- The Good Samaritan's wound care and Isaiah's fig plaster for Hezekiah demonstrate practical treatment without unbelief.

Col. 4:14; Luke 10:34; Isa. 38:21

8 FAITH IS NOT FEELING



- Faith rests on the Word of God, not on emotional intensity or manufactured certainty.
- The father who said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," shows genuine dependence while acknowledging struggle.

Rom. 10:17; Mark 9:24; 2 Cor. 5:7

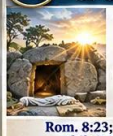
9 EXPOSE THE COUNTERFEIT



- The Bible warns of deceptive signs, purchasing spiritual power, and those who make merchandise of the sick.
- Voluntary giving is biblical, but selling miracles, guaranteed healings, or special power is condemned.

Acts 8:18-20; 2 Pet. 2:3; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 6:5-10

10 THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY



- At the rapture and resurrection, the believer's corruptible body will be changed and made like Christ's glorious body.
- In the eternal order there will be no more death, sorrow, or pain.

Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:42-54; Phil. 3:20-21; Rev. 21:4

DOCTRINAL SYNTHESIS: *God can heal today. No preacher can guarantee every healing today, Christ guarantees the final redemption of every believer's body.*

VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES