

DEATH : FINAL BATTLE, FINAL VICTORY! : PART 1

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As I mention in the article "The Lord Will Lift You Up!", if there is one thing of which every one of us can be certain, it is that from the time we are born, until the day in which we die, we will all face a certain amount of problems in our lives. Whether it is a hungry baby clamoring for his busy mother's attention, or young siblings fighting over one of their favorite toys, or a young teenager having his first serious disagreement with his parents, or an adult having problems with the boss at the workplace, or a married couple considering divorce, problems are just an inescapable part of our short lives here in the physical realm.

As we enter the final years of our pilgrimage on this Earth, while none of us look forward to such things, we oft times find ourselves facing even more life-threatening situations as our bodies begin to break down due to time and usage. Our eyes grow dim and tired, sometimes plagued with cataracts. Cholesterol and clogged arteries becomes a serious issue which earlier in our lives we never once considered. Memory sometimes becomes unreliable as we suddenly find ourselves in a battle against time and Alzheimer's disease. We become conscious of going bald as our hair slowly begins to thin. Sometimes different organs -- such as our kidneys -- begin to malfunction. Our back grows weak and bent, and it seems as if our strength is sapped from our bodies upon doing the smallest of tasks.

In short, as the Bible clearly informs us, while in the days of our youth we were full of strength and carried ourselves with pride and self-confidence, we are suddenly forced to acknowledge the weakness, vulnerability and frailty of our human condition. We humbly recognize that we are truly only dust. We are as the grass that turns brown and eventually withers, or as a green leaf that fades as the cold winter approaches. Our life is but as a cloud which only appears for a little time in the sky and then vanishes in the distance. Consider the following verses:

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."
Psalms 103:14, KJV

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."
Isaiah 40:6-8, KJV

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."
James 4:14, KJV

While the current human life span averages from about sixty to ninety years, with a small percentage of people exceeding this range, God's Word clearly indicates that this has not always been the case. In the informative article entitled "The Earth Is Under 7,000 Years Old!", this can be observed in the lives of the antediluvian, and the early post-Flood, Patriarchs; some of whom lived for almost a thousand years. Following is a graph which is based upon some of the data that is included in the aforementioned article. I trust that you will find it interesting. Please note that due to the graphic format, the life lines are not exact, but they are close to being accurate in most cases:

[LIFESPANS OF THE PARTRIARCHS GRAPH GIF INSERTED HERE]

One can only wonder how Adam must have felt as he began to witness the long-term effects of his disobedience in the Garden of Eden, beginning with the cold-blooded murder of Abel by his jealous brother Cain. We are told that it wasn't until the days of Adam's grandson, Enos, that men once again began to call upon the name of the Lord, as we see by this verse:

"And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."
Genesis 4:26, KJV

The implication of this verse seems to be that men did not call upon the Lord for a time following the ouster from the Garden of Eden. If this is indeed the case, then it would seem that from the time of Abel's death, through the birth of Seth, to the birth of Enos, it must have been a very dark time for mankind. Adam and Eve must have truly felt abandoned by the Lord after being ousted from the Garden of Eden. While previously, Adam and Eve only knew God's Love, now they fully understood and experienced His Wrath as well. As I explain in the article "Beholding The Evil And The Good", while the Lord didn't really abandon Adam and Eve, perhaps He had to allow them to think that He did, in order that they might learn a few valuable lessons.

Imagine if you were Adam and Eve; and you had to tell your son Seth how you had once lived in a place of incomparable beauty called the Garden of Eden; where there was no need for back-breaking hard work or suffering; but then you had been driven out because of things you had done against your Creator's wishes. Or consider how hard it must have been for them to inform Seth at some point in his life, that he once had a brother named Abel who had been killed by his older brother Cain, who then fled from the family in shame. It may have taken a while before Adam and Eve were even able to

share their failures with their family. It must have weighed heavily upon them. We also know that life was hard for the early Patriarchs; for since the days of The Fall, the Lord had cursed the ground so that it grudgingly brought forth fruit for early man's survival, as we see by these verses:

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;"

Genesis 3:17-18, KJV

"And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed."

Genesis 5:29, KJV

Imagine the mental anguish it must have caused Adam and Eve to watch the next eight generations toil and suffer because of their sins. Notice also that, based upon my understanding of the chronology of the Book of Genesis, Methuselah -- who was Noah's grandfather -- died the same year that the Flood arrived upon the Earth. We can only wonder if in His Mercy, the Lord allowed Methuselah to die of old age only days, weeks, or perhaps at best, months, prior to the Flood. Is it possible that Methuselah may have actually died as a result of the Flood, due to his own disbelief? We honestly do not know, being as the Bible is silent regarding this matter.

I also find it rather interesting that, aside from Abel's premature death at the hands of his jealous brother, Cain, Methuselah was the first Patriarch to outlive his son. Based upon my calculations, Methuselah lived five years beyond the death of his own son, Lamech, who was the father of Noah. I am not including Enoch here, being as the Bible informs us that he actually walked with God; and apparently, Enoch did not experience a normal physical death as far as we know. Consider the following verses:

"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Genesis 5:22-24, KJV

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Hebrews 11:5, KJV

As I point out in the four-part series entitled "The Two Sackcloth Witnesses Of Revelation 11", because Enoch seems to have never suffered a physical death, some Bible teachers speculate that he may be one of the two Sackcloth Witnesses who are mentioned in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation. We are told that they witness in Israel during the final three and a half years of the reign of the Beast; and that once they complete their witness, they are killed, and their bodies lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days, during which time the world rejoices. But then the world is quite shocked when the Two Witnesses are suddenly, and miraculously, resurrected, and called up to

Heaven. This event seems to coincide with the sound of the Seventh Trump, and the Return of Jesus Christ to the Earth. Consider the following verses:

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth . . . And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them."

Revelation 11:3, 7-12, KJV

While Adam's days may have been full of anguish and mental turmoil, Noah may have been blessed with the exact opposite. This ancient Patriarch lived to see nine generations of his descendants repopulate the restored Earth following the Flood. While I have calculated that Noah died just two years before Abraham's birth, if we account for human error, it is possible that Noah may have still been alive at the time the Patriarch Abraham was born in the land of the Chaldees. The dates that I provide in "The Earth Is Under 7,000 Years Old" do have a small margin of error, being as we are not certain at what time of the year each of the Patriarchs was born. This allows for a fluctuation of one or two years with some of the dates. Noah's second son, Shem, likewise lived long enough to see the next ten generations, up to and including Isaac. In fact, based upon the Scriptural evidence, it seems that Shem may have died just ten years before Jacob was born.

Following the year of the Flood, we can only wonder how the elderly Patriarchs began to feel, as they witnessed their descendants living less years than themselves, as a result of the accelerated aging process. As we know, Adam lived to be nine hundred and thirty years old; Methuselah lived to be nine hundred and sixty-nine years old; and Noah lived to be nine hundred and fifty years old. Immediately following the Flood, the Bible records a clear, rapid decline in the human lifespan; so that by the time of Abraham, people were living under two hundred years, or less than twenty percent of the lifespan of the first Patriarchs. Not even four hundred years later, Moses was extremely old when he died on the top of Pisgah at the age of one hundred and twenty. In the Book of Psalms, King David writes that he lived to be only seventy years old; and to this day, this continues to be the average worldwide norm. Consider David's words:

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Psalms 90:10, KJV

I believe that perhaps one of the reasons why the Lord may

have chosen to limit man's lifespan following the Flood, was because it was the most effective way to curtail evil, and thus prevent mankind from totally destroying itself before God's Plan of Salvation had been achieved. We only need to look at all of the evil that man has created and committed during this past century alone, to see how true this really is. Even though most people do not live to even reach ninety years of age, this has still been sufficient time for man to create horrific devices, which are now capable of destroying the population of the entire planet; and in the same process reducing the entire Earth to a lifeless cinder block!

While modern atheistic men tend to reject the Word of Truth that's found in the Biblical record, as Christians, we know that the human condition is not evolving or getting better. Quite to the contrary, it is progressively getting worse, and becoming more evil, violent and barbaric, as national governments devise quicker, more efficient, more effective methods for killing their perceived enemies. Furthermore, I am of the belief that this situation will only continue to get worse, until the appearance of our Lord from Heaven. So again, contrary to popular belief, humanity is experiencing moral, spiritual, physical and social deterioration at an alarming rate like never before.

In thinking about man's maddening rush to destroy himself by his own hand, I am reminded of something that Jesus said in one of His sermons that is found in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. In describing the period of great tribulation which would occur prior to His Return, the Lord says that the situation would become so bad, that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved". Consider the following verses:

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect, those days shall be shortened."

Matthew 24:21-22, KJV

Stop and think for a moment. What other living species on this planet is so foolish as to destroy itself by its own hands? Surely this point emphasizes the insanity of modern men. Not satisfied with destroying ourselves alone, we have now resorted to ruining the very precious Earth upon which our Heavenly Father has given us to live. We are destroying our forests, water, air and seas at unprecedented levels. As the Apostle Paul wrote, all of creation groans waiting to be delivered; and indeed, it shall be delivered at the Return of Jesus Christ, as we see here:

"Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 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."

Romans 8:21-23, KJV

As we know from reading the Book of Genesis, it was also because of the great evil which was upon the Earth in those days, that the Lord repented of the work of His own Hands, and chose to destroy it through the Flood. Only in this way

could He thoroughly purge the Earth of the evil seed and start anew. Consider the following verses:

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Genesis 6:5-7, KJV

I find that phrase so amazing; ". . . every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually". What depth of wickedness dwells in the hearts of men. Through his own pride and folly, early man went from being the Lord's crowning creation, to being something despicable which God finally found necessary to destroy. Man did this to himself without any help from God, although the Fallen Angels most certainly had a hand in this treachery against humanity. If you are interested in learning more about this topic, please consider reading such articles as "Nephilim: The Giants Of Genesis", "The Book Of Enoch: Truth Or Heresy?" "Sex, A Bowl Of Soup And The Nature Of Angels", and "The Judgment Of Angels, Demons And Men".

But as I was saying, man was a beautiful piece of pottery in the Hands of his Divine Creator; but through the subtle lies and deceptions of that evil serpent, Satan, and his cohorts, God's perfect creation became marred, and as a result, had to be cast into the fire of tribulation. In the end, only one vessel and his family remained; that being the man Noah. As I point out in other articles, the Lord tells us the very same thing concerning the evilness of man's heart in the Book of Jeremiah, where the Prophet wrote the following:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Jeremiah 17:9, KJV

Is it any wonder then that the Bible informs us that in His appointed time, God will once again shake the Earth, pour out His Wrath upon the seed of evildoers, and start all over again with His dear children who do believe in and reverence Him? Consider the following verses:

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

2 Peter 3:3-7, KJV

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

1 Thessalonians 5:3-4, KJV

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."

Hebrews 12:25-29, KJV

In contemplating these different Biblical facts, I am amazed by how we are constantly being lied to, and brainwashed into accepting the myth that, thanks in large part to the modern false gods of science, medicine and technology, the human lifespan has been extended. To uphold this myth, supporters point to such things as the short lives of the early American settlers. We are told that compared to some people today who live into their nineties, and sometimes even beyond that, the American settlers died quite young -- in their thirties and forties -- due to the challenges which they had to face in their daily lives as they went about pioneering the country. This included such obstacles as harsh winters, a scarcity of food, incurable diseases, and conflicts with both human and natural enemies of one sort or another.

While this may have indeed been the case with a number of our forefathers -- obviously, not everyone died in their thirties and forties -- I still believe that this is not painting an honest picture. Furthermore, embracing this myth also serves to subtly shift our attention from the Lord, and His natural laws governing human life, to the gods of modern science and medicine.

An examination of the historical record, whether it is on a national level, or on a worldwide scale, will clearly reveal that the average human lifespan has remained rather constant since the days of the post-Flood Patriarchs. In other words, as a race, we've continued to live the same average of years for the past four thousand years with very little variation, regardless of what man might do in order to try to change it. Even if the human lifespan has seen a slight increase since the advent of modern science and medicine, this increase has had a very minimal effect on the world average of the past four thousand years. As such, in my view, it is not enough to substantiate the false claim that through his own wisdom and power, man has extended the life expectancy rate. This is a subtle deception. I am reminded of the following verse which is found in Paul's second Epistle to Timothy:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

Now, lest some of you get the wrong impression, let me also state the following. In all fairness, I will be the first to admit that due to the advances which have been made in the areas of modern science and medicine, a small percentage of people have indeed been given the opportunity to live longer and perhaps healthier lives. Medical procedures such as bone and skin grafts, organ transplants and blood transfusions, laser technology, the creation of artificial hormones such as insulin, the invention of various prosthetic devices and

similar technologies have all contributed to extending the lives of certain people. In fact, I will be quite candid and tell you that my daughter is alive today due to her daily insulin injections. Without them, she would have been dead years ago.

On the other hand, I must also point out that, as I discuss in the article "Organ Transplants And Blood Transfusions", there's a very dark side to some of these practices as well. Furthermore, as a Christian, I sometimes wonder how the Lord views some of these practices which, while well-meaning, are really our desperate attempts to avoid, or perhaps at least to temporarily escape, the eventuality which faces us all; that is, death. Is it possible that we are fighting against God's Will for our lives when we resort to these procedures? By trying to prolong our existence, are we in fact rejecting the number of days and years which He has allotted to us? I will discuss this idea in more detail in a moment.

Having stated the above, the point still remains that these people who do prolong their lives through the intervention of modern science and medicine, constitute a fairly small percentage of the overall population of the Earth; and it has had very little effect on changing the worldwide life expectancy rate. From this perspective, it is fair to say that man on the whole is simply not living longer than he did a few hundred years ago, much less thousands of years ago. It is just a modern myth as far as I can tell.

You can verify this fact for yourself simply by performing a small amount of genealogical research with your own family. If you study even the last two or three generations, and then survey all of your currently living relatives, you will probably come to the conclusion that there is really little, if any, difference in the overall family life expectancy rate. Sixty to ninety years will probably still be the norm, just as it has been for thousands of years, with perhaps a few people peaking that point now and then.

To further emphasize the point that modern science has had little impact on the worldwide life expectancy rate, consider the fact that the vast majority of the world's population is comprised of poor people who live in underdeveloped nations. Most of these medical developments and procedures aren't even available in these nations; and even if they were, they would not be affordable by most people. Furthermore, how often have we read of foreign dignitaries who go to the United States of America, or to Western Europe, in order to undergo special medical treatment which is not available in their own nation?

This demonstrates that these advanced medical procedures are for the most part only accessible to citizens who live in the industrialized nations; and even then, not to everyone. While one may assume that the majority of these people are covered by some form of medical insurance, and thus should be able to avail themselves of these advanced procedures, the truth is more troubling. According to statistics that were released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2008, almost 46 million Americans were without some type of health insurance during at least part of the previous year. Furthermore, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services survey found that there were almost 58 million uninsured Americans at some point during the first half of 2008.

While there is considerable debate surrounding the accuracy of the aforementioned figures, nevertheless, they demonstrate

that there are millions of Americans who are unable to take full advantage of the benefits which are provided by modern science and medicine. While federal law dictates that no US hospital can deny treatment to patients who appear in their emergency room, the unspoken truth is that individuals who do have some form of health insurance, or who can afford to pay by some other means, receive better medical attention. Not only that, but not all medical procedures are fully covered by health insurance in the United States, and some are not covered at all. With the current push to restructure both Medicare and Social Security, many Americans find themselves facing an uncertain future.

As I discuss in "Organ Transplants And Blood Transfusions", it is truly sad to see how politicized caring for the sick and the elderly has become in the United States of America. Rather than being motivated by love, mercy and compassion, many health care facilities have been taken over by HMO's, or Health Maintenance Organizations, whose primary interest is in profit, and in operating hospitals like efficient business enterprises. As I noted a moment ago, rather than serve their local communities with impartiality, offering assistance to those first in line regardless of their social and economic status, some of these HMO's employ discriminatory practices by offering their services first to those who can afford to pay their exorbitant fees. A heart transplant will be performed on a man whose pockets are bulging with money, before it will be performed on a poor child from the ghetto who has no means to pay; even if that child has been on the waiting list for a longer time.

What is also disheartening, is the fact that when some of these poor people do manage to meet the financial demands of the health care institution in question, it is sometimes at a very great price. It isn't unusual for one's entire life savings to be spent during such medical emergencies, as well as during the rehabilitation period which may follow it. If they do recover from their ailment, the sick person is often left with very little upon which to subsist afterwards. In some cases, houses and other personal properties are sold, and the family of the sick individual goes deep into debt in order to meet their financial obligations to the health care facility.

I find it very difficult to accept that this is the Will of our Heavenly Father. Personally, I feel that this is simply taking financial advantage of the misfortunes and tragedies of others. As in a certain story that is found in the Gospel of Luke, sometimes great amounts of money are spent; and the afflicted person still does not recover from their ailment; thus revealing the danger of trusting in modern science and medicine, instead of in the Great Physician. Consider the following verses:

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed

immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."
Luke 8:43-48, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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DEATH : FINAL BATTLE, FINAL VICTORY! : PART 2

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God Knows His Creations And Doesn't Require Doctors In Order To Heal People, May God's Will Be Done, Medical Emergencies, Immediate On-The-Spot Healing, Jesus Is The Same Yesterday And Today, Woman With The Issue Of Blood, Life Savings Spent On Physicians And Yet None The Better, God Doesn't Need Time To Heal, Looking For Loopholes, Indisputable Divine Healing, Has God Suddenly Changed His Tactics?, My Respect For Medical Professionals, Does God Work Through Doctors?, Divine Healing Is A Complete Act Of God Which Does Not Require Human Skills Knowledge Or Intervention, God's Human Conduits, The Purpose Of Miracles, Common Unlearned Men, Glory Belongs To God Alone, A Gift From Above, Treasure In Earthen Vessels, Excellency Of The Power, New Testament Examples, Whose Miracle Is It?, Our Jealous God, Without Faith It Is Impossible To Please Him, Little White Pill Gods, Real Faith And The Medical Profession Peter's Mother-In-Law With A Fever, Paul Bitten By The Viper

As I explain in articles such as "Are The Gifts Of The Spirit For Today?" and "Why Doesn't God Heal Me?", if God wishes to heal someone, He does not require any assistance whatsoever from man, or from his modern inventions. He is the Omnipotent God who created all things out of nothing; and He knows and fully understands the interior workings of His own creations far better than any doctor upon the face of this planet. In the Book of Psalms, we find the following interesting verses which demonstrate how the Lord carefully planned and designed each one of our bodies, even before we were created in the physical realm:

"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Psalms 139:13-16, KJV

Surely then, if there is something wrong with our bodies, He is quite capable of repairing it; if we will only trust fully

in Him. Of course, whether or not healing will actually occur also depends on God's Will for that particular individual. As I point out in the aforementioned articles, sometimes, while we may not understand it at the time, God has other plans for our lives which, in the end, may glorify Him even more than an actual Miracle of Healing. So we must pray that God's Will will be done, and not just our own selfish desires. I will be discussing this particular point in more detail later on in this series.

Sometimes people will write to me and inform me how they have experienced a certain medical emergency in their lives. While sharing their ordeal with me, they will often go into detail explaining the precise nature of their affliction, as well as describe the medical procedures which were taken in order to improve their condition. These people are usually my brethren in the Lord; and they will quite often mention how everyone was praying for their recovery. Afterwards, they proceed to give thanks to the Lord for healing them, once the medical crisis has passed.

When I hear such stories, I am of course happy to know that the person involved has been restored to health; yet at the same time, I must confess that I feel a bit troubled in my heart. Why? Because I believe that there is a certain degree of personal deception involved in these kinds of situations which many Christians are simply not willing to recognize. I also know that if I were to be honest with these people, and expose this deception to them, some of them would most likely be offended by the truth.

I suspect that one of the reasons why people sometimes refuse to acknowledge this deception, is because it causes them some level of embarrassment. Exactly what is this deception? As I point out in "Are The Gifts Of The Spirit For Today?", it is simply this: An honest study of the Bible reveals that all of the Miracles which were performed by Jesus and His Disciples were immediate, on-the-spot occurrences. Nowhere do we find any significant time delay factor mentioned. Jesus spoke the word, or a person in the crowd touched Him, or the Disciples laid their hands on somebody, and immediately a Miracle of healing occurred. There is a preponderance of verses which fully support this view. Please consider the following:

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

Matthew 8:3, KJV

"And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

Matthew 8:13, KJV

"So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."

Matthew 20:34, KJV

"And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."

Mark 1:31, KJV

"And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."

Mark 1:42, KJV

"And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

Mark 2:12, KJV

"And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment."

Mark 5:42, KJV

"And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

Mark 7:35, KJV

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

Mark 10:52, KJV

"Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd . . . And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."

Luke 8:44, 47, KJV

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."

Acts 3:7, KJV

"And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."

Acts 9:34, KJV

"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."

Acts 13:11, KJV

Over and over again we see the same thing occurring. Even though the Lord is no longer with us in the flesh today, it is my strong belief that Divine Healing should still be an instantaneous act. After all, as we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Hebrews 13:8, KJV

If the Lord healed people instantaneously two thousand years ago, then He is quite capable of doing the very same thing in our modern day. He does not require hours, or days, or weeks, or months, or several years to heal someone. Nowhere in the Bible do we find such prolonged processes of healing, where a person is told to go home and wait for a few days or a week for their healing to occur. Neither do we find any place in the Bible where the Lord or His Disciples instruct people to submit themselves to a doctor's medical regimen, in order that the Lord might heal them. In fact, as I noted in part one, the woman who had an issue of blood "had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any". It was only when she touched the border of the Lord's garment, as a last resort, that she was healed of her affliction.

In my view, a slow medical recovery could easily be used to refute the mighty Healing Power of God; because unbelievers could then attribute the person's restoration to health to the medicine they took, or perhaps to weeks of chemotherapy, or maybe to a certain operation which was performed on them, or perhaps to the time factor, or even to the body's natural healing processes. In other words, there are all kinds of medical loopholes which hard-hearted people would be able to use in order to try to prove that a person's Divine Healing had absolutely nothing to do with the Power of God, and some people will be foolish enough to believe them.

In contrast, when God truly does work through His children to heal others, or when He heals directly without using someone as His conduit, as we've seen by the previous verses, it will be an immediate, on-the-spot deliverance from the affliction. In this way, no one, except perhaps the most hard-hearted of individuals, will continue to deny the Healing Power of God. The healing Miracle happens so quickly, and so unexpectedly, that there is simply no other plausible reason, be it medical or otherwise, to explain it; and therefore, God must be given the credit, to His own glory.

In such cases where genuine Divine Healing Miracles do occur, even the doctors themselves remain baffled by the patient's sudden and unexplainable recovery from their life-threatening illness. In their hearts, the honest ones will know that they had absolutely nothing to do with the person's recovery. In fact, they might have already given up on the patient, and were simply doing what they could to make the person's life comfortable -- by providing palliative care -- until it came to an end.

Sadly, it seems that in our modern, technological world of science and medicine, many people -- including quite a few Christians -- have been deceived either by Satan, or perhaps by their own pride. Rather than be honest with themselves, and humbly admit their own lack of faith in expecting true on-the-spot Miracles from the Lord, they have invented the lie that, somewhere during the past two thousand years, El Shaddai -- the Almighty God -- suddenly changed His tactics. In other words, for some unexplainable reason, they would have us to believe that God has decided to be more subtle in His approach to healing people. The Lord seems to have been overcome with shyness, and so now He uses doctors and nurses to heal people, instead of doing it directly Himself, as He did for thousands of years in the Bible.

If you are a member of the medical profession, I hope that you understand that my intention is not to discredit doctors and nurses, or any other medical practitioners for that matter. In fact, as I have mentioned before, I have great respect for, and admire, anyone who chooses to dedicate their life to unselfishly helping to improve the lives, and ease the suffering, of their fellow human beings, whether they are a doctor, nurse, paramedic, social worker or engage in any other humanitarian field. My point in making these comments is simply to show the contrast between what God is capable of doing, what medical professionals can do, and to expose the lack of faith of my fellow Christian brethren.

So as I was saying, because of the deception which has crept into our faith, certain Christians have embraced the belief that instead of performing outright, unquestionable Miracles, in our modern day, God appears to have decided to share His

Glory with doctors and other medical professionals. Whereas in ages past He performed Miracles on His own, He now works through their hands by giving them the wisdom to know what to do, and how to do it. It is not for me to judge or determine whether or not any of these professionals receive help from the Lord. Perhaps they do, particularly if they are members of our Christian faith; but do you honestly believe that God, the Creator of the Universe, requires their help in order to perform a Miracle of Divine Healing? I don't.

As we have already seen, when the Scriptures speak of Divine Healing, this isn't what they are talking about, because true Divine Healing is an Act of God which does not require human intervention of any kind. In other words, Divine Healing does not require learned human knowledge, or learned human skills, such as medical professionals possess.

Allow me to ask you a simple question. If God prefers to work through doctors and nurses -- as certain Christians claim -- and if He really does not mind sharing His Glory with human beings, then why do the Gospels contain a very specific story where we are told that the woman who had an issue of blood spent her entire living on physicians, but was still none the better? Why didn't God use those physicians to heal that poor woman? The answer seems rather obvious to me: God shares His Glory with no one. It was only the Virtue which flowed from His own dear Son which instantaneously removed the affliction from her.

While God does not need or require human-acquired knowledge or skills in order to perform Miracles of Divine Healing, this does not mean that He always bypasses humans entirely. The Scriptures reveal that God sometimes works through one of His servants who acts as His conduit -- or "reservoir of power" -- or simply as a "faith inspirer"; at least this was the case during the First Century.

Two thousand years ago, the Lord transferred the Power to heal people, and perform other Miracles, to some of His most trusted Disciples. They merely spoke the word, or laid their hands on someone, or else their shadow fell across someone, and they were healed. The Bible informs us that these were for the most part common, unlearned men who did not possess any special knowledge or skills in the area of medicine, Luke obviously being one exception to this. This Power was given to them to use as a tool, and as a testimony of the awesome Power of the Almighty God which resided with them, and which accompanied them as they travelled the dusty roads of Israel and beyond. God's primary purpose in bestowing His Power on the Disciples was to win others to Christ, and thus to the Kingdom of Heaven. Consider the following verses:

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."
Matthew 10:7-8, KJV

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."
Luke 10:19, KJV

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In

my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Mark 16:15-18, KJV

Please notice that in the previous verses, Jesus emphasizes that their primary mission is to preach the Kingdom of God; and that the reason why these signs will follow them, is to authenticate their position as messengers of the Kingdom of God. As I mentioned a moment ago, the Bible clearly reveals that the Disciples were common men who did not possess any theological degrees from the Sanhedrin, or a license from the Jerusalem Association of Medical Doctors. God purposely chose these kinds of men so that He would receive all of the Glory for anything good which might happen through them. In this way, the Kingdom was preached, thousands of souls were won, and everyone praised God for it. Consider the following verses where we are repeatedly told that God chooses weak, human vessels, in order that His Glory and Power might be revealed through them:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

Acts 4:13, KJV

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:25-31, KJV

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth . . . Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:17-18, 31, KJV

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

2 Corinthians 4:5, KJV

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

2 Corinthians 10:17, KJV

"Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."

2 Corinthians 12:5-6, KJV

"Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

Galatians 5:26, KJV

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Galatians 6:14, KJV

"Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ."

1 Thessalonians 2:6, KJV

So to reiterate, this Power to instantaneously heal others of their afflictions does not originate from learned human knowledge or skills, such as medical professionals possess. As the Apostles James and Paul inform us in the verses that follow, it is a Gift which comes "down from the Father of lights", and is deposited in these, our "earthen vessels", so "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us":

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

James 1:17, KJV

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV

If you would like to better understand the previous verses, and how and why the Lord chooses to operate through certain people, please consider reading such articles as "A Treasure In Earthen Vessels: God's Promise Of The Spirit", "The Only Credentials You Need", "So You Really Think You Are So Humble" and "The Wisdom Of God Versus The Philosophy Of Men".

If there is one thing of which we can be certain, it is that the Power of God did indeed rest upon these Disciples once their pride had been broken, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. God's Spirit worked mightily through Peter, Paul and many other of the First Century Christians. Consider the following inspiring examples of the instantaneous on-the-spot Miracles which were performed through some of these men:

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner . . . And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? . . . And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all . . ."

Acts 3:12,16, 4:8-11, KJV

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches,

that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."

Acts 5:14-16, KJV

"And God wrought special Miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Acts 19:11-12, KJV

Considering the preponderance of Scriptural evidence which I have now shared with you, I hope that you can understand why I personally believe that it is unwarranted to suggest that in our modern day, the Lord has decided to humble Himself and work through the hands of worldly medical professionals, some of whom don't even believe in God. As we have seen, the purpose of Miracles -- such as Divine Healing -- is both to win souls to the Kingdom of God, and to glorify God as well. It is obvious that this is not the primary objective of the majority of people who enter the medical profession.

As I mentioned earlier, some people choose to become doctors, nurses, dentists, etc., because they really do want to help people in a physical way; they want to be a blessing to their fellow man; and we should indeed appreciate and admire them for their lifelong dedication to easing the pain of others. Of course, there are also those who are simply motivated by the desire to earn a lot of money; but I dare say that very few people enter the medical profession because it is their desire that God will work through their hands so that they can win souls to Jesus Christ. God doesn't want to share His Glory with them, and most of them do not want to share the glory with Him either. It is only when an undeniable Miracle has occurred, that some of them are even willing to admit or acknowledge that God may exist.

This being the case, then why do some people foolishly make the claim that God now performs subtle Miracles through the hands of medical professionals? Why is He hiding behind such people? Why is He not performing His Miracles openly as in years gone by? How are we supposed to differentiate between when science and medicine cure a person, from when the Lord actually heals a person? How are we supposed to know when to praise man for his accomplishments, and when to praise God for His true Miracles? Why is the Lord allowing them to take the credit for His handiwork? Obviously, there is absolutely no Scriptural soundness to this idea. The Scriptures clearly reveal that He is a jealous God, and that He will have no other gods before Him. Consider the following verses:

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;"

Exodus 20:5, KJV

"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:"

Exodus 34:14, KJV

"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

Deuteronomy 4:24, KJV

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,"
Deuteronomy 5:9, KJV

"(For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."
Deuteronomy 6:15, KJV

Do you now understand the deception which lurks behind this erroneous mentality? It is a flimsy excuse that many people have embraced because, perhaps in their pride, they are just not willing to admit that they don't have the faith that they know they should have. This is particularly true if they know the Lord, and possess a firm foundation in His Word. In His Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul clearly tells us:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
Hebrews 11:6, KJV

You see, as Christians, we all know in our hearts that when we do not have the faith that the Lord expects us to have, we are displeasing to Him. Therefore, to cover our own sin, to hide our own embarrassment, and to lessen our feelings of guilt, we've invented this lie that God now does His healing through the medical profession. The Lord is now some kind of an undercover Healing Agent. He has modernized His approach. He no longer wants all of the praise and the glory like He used to want it.

The simple truth of the matter is that our faith is not truly in God; it is in the doctors, in the nurses, and in other professionals who assist us during our times of medical need. Instead of seeking God in desperate prayer, we either reach for a bottle of our favorite little white pill gods in the medicine cabinet, or else we run to see the doctor. Let's be honest with ourselves. Isn't this really the truth? Who are we deceiving here? Certainly not the Lord. He knows the true score.

To prove how accurate this statement really is, consider that in most cases, if we had not chosen to go to the hospital for the operation, or for the chemotherapy, or for whatever the treatment may have been, in all likelihood, we probably would have grown worse and died. Why? Because we really place our faith in the false gods of modern science and medicine, and not in the Omnipotent God of the Bible. To really emphasize this point, let's examine a few New Testament examples.

Imagine if you will, if when Peter's mother-in-law came down with a fever, Peter would have said to the Lord, "Excuse me Jesus, but I need to go out and fetch the village physician. I'm sorry, but I just don't think you are able to handle this illness". That is basically what we are saying today when we immediately bypass God, and straightway put our trust in the medical profession. Or imagine if you will, if when the viper came out of the fire and bit Paul, he had immediately called for the local witch doctor. What poor testimonies these would have been. The following verses tell us what really happened during these two incidents:

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."

Matthew 8:14-15, KJV

"And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."

Acts 28:3-6, KJV

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

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DEATH : FINAL BATTLE, FINAL VICTORY! : PART 3

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That is the kind of faith the Lord expects His children to have. In the case of the Apostle Paul, he was so convinced that it was God's Will for him to go to Rome in order to be a witness to the royalty there, that he knew that absolutely nothing was going to stand in his way, or prevent him from accomplishing his goal; not the evil machinations of the unbelieving Jews; not a shipwreck on the island of Malta, and certainly not a poisonous viper hidden in the fire wood. Perhaps that is why his faith was so strong, despite the expectation of the islanders that he would soon be dead.

Lord help us all to have that same kind of unwavering faith. I most certainly include myself in this admonishment, and recognize that despite my knowing the Lord, and despite the fact that I have studied His Word for so many years now, I apparently do not possess that kind of faith. As I briefly mentioned in part one, not quite ten years ago, at the age of eleven, my daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. As you can imagine, I was really heartbroken and devastated upon learning of her condition. I could not understand why a child who loved the Lord as much as she did, who read and studied the Bible on a daily basis, and who was a faithful witness to her friends and teachers at school, was afflicted with a life-sapping disease such as Diabetes Mellitus.

As any Christian parent would do, I felt a sense of guilt, and began to point the finger at myself. Had I failed to take proper care of her? Did my neglect bring on her Diabetes? Was it possible that God was using her to punish me for my sins? To this day, I am still not certain why the Lord has allowed this to happen in our lives. For months after her diagnosis, I desperately prayed and earnestly asked the Lord to deliver my daughter from her affliction. I hoped for a Miracle. But, as the months passed, and no Divine Healing was manifest, I gradually came to realize that for whatever His reasons, the Lord apparently didn't have plans to heal my daughter of her Diabetes; not then, and still not today ten years later. For more on this topic, please consider reading "Why Doesn't God Heal Me?".

The Holy Scriptures plainly inform us that our God has power over life and over death. He has the power to create, as well as the power to destroy. He has the power to heal whomsoever He will, and He has the power to wound. He created the first man and the first woman. He wiped out His First Creation with a Flood. He slew the firstborn in Egypt. He healed Naaman the army captain of the King of Syria. He healed King Hezekiah of Judah. He placed a baby in the womb of a virgin named Mary. He smote King Herod with worms so that he died. He smote Paul with blindness for three days. He has healed, or killed, many people down through the ages without the need for any kind of human intervention whatsoever. Consider the following verses:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"

Deuteronomy 30:19, KJV

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

Deuteronomy 32:39, KJV

"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."

Revelation 1:18, KJV

"And said, 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."

Exodus 15:26, KJV

"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."

Isaiah 53:5, KJV

Despite His wonder and His might, look at how we all cower in unbelief when it comes to matters of faith and expecting great things from the Almighty. Look at how we try to excuse ourselves by foolishly claiming that He has transposed His Power to mortal men and women who work in worldly hospitals and other health care facilities. Sadly, the Lord Himself saw this day coming. He knew full well that the time would arrive when faith would indeed be weak upon the Earth. In one of His Parables that is found in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said in part to His Disciples:

". . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:8b, KJV

If you are one who has found it necessary to resort to the modern medical profession during your time of need, please understand that I do not share these Scriptural truths with you in order to condemn you, or to criticize your decision. Who knows; I may have done the very same thing had I been in your situation. In fact, when it comes to physical pain, I'm a coward. When I get a bad toothache, I run to the dentist to get it taken care of as soon as possible. And, as I have already said, if it weren't for modern medicine, my daughter would no doubt be dead by now.

As Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew, and as the Apostle Paul wisely advises us in his discussion of meat eaters and vegetarians, we must all live and believe according to our own degree of faith. I cannot have faith for you, and you cannot have faith for me. Consider these verses:

"Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."

Matthew 9:29, KJV

". . . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind . . . Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Romans 14:5b, 22-23, KJV

The main purpose of my comments is simply to motivate all of us to be honest with ourselves, as well as with our Creator. Instead of hypocritically pretending to have faith, let's just humbly admit that we really don't; which is why we've chosen to seek medical attention in the first place. One of the potential dangers of pretending to have faith, or perhaps deceiving ourselves into thinking that we have faith, is that it can have very serious consequences for people who are not able to make decisions for themselves. In particular, I am thinking of young children.

As I write this, I am reminded of heartbreaking stories which occasionally appear in the news, where Christian parents have refused to take their sick children to the hospital, because they claim to have had faith that God would heal them. It is so sad to read such stories. Not only do the children have no say in the matter, but sometimes they die unnecessarily, as a result of the parents' insistence that they not see a doctor.

Believe me; I fully understand the mentality of "I'd rather die trusting in God". However, in my view, it is one thing to take that kind of a stance for yourself, and quite another to make that kind of a decision for your children. My advice is this:

Before any Christian parent decides to not seek medical attention for their very sick children, stop and think about the serious legal consequences you will face if your child should die. While you may look at it as a matter of faith and trusting in God, in the eyes of the world, your actions will no doubt be viewed as a matter of gross parental neglect. In short, unless you are absolutely certain, and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God has intentions of healing your child, please plan a visit to your family physician. Please remember what I shared earlier. God does not require days, weeks or months to heal a person. If He intends to perform a Divine Healing, then it will be done immediately, just like in the Bible.

To sum up my thoughts on this issue, it is this: There is no such thing as trying to have faith. You either really have it, or else you really don't. Are you willing to gamble with the life of your child in order to find out where you really stand in the area of faith? Could you bear to have the death of your child on your hands because your faith turned out to be bogus?

Returning to the issue of Divine Healing and the medical profession, as I noted earlier, none of us can claim with any degree of confidence that the Lord healed us of cancer or some other life-threatening illness, when we just spent the last few weeks in the hospital undergoing chemotherapy or some other treatment. That is not relying on the Healing Power of God; it is placing our faith in the medical skills, knowledge and wisdom of men, just like the desperate woman who Jesus healed of an issue of blood, after she wound up broke, gave up on the doctors and sought out the one true Great Physician.

So again I ask: Why are we praying "Lord, please anoint the doctor's hands", when He really expects us to have faith directly in Him? Why are we insisting through our own lack of faith that the Almighty God of the Universe humble Himself and work through mere humans?

By now, the dilemma should be clear to you. How can we really determine if it was actually the Lord who miraculously healed us, or if it was really the chemotherapy which destroyed the cancerous growth in our body? Did we really throw ourselves out on the limb of faith before we chose to see a doctor? Did we honestly give God a fair chance to work before we sought medical help? Sadly, in most cases, probably not; because our faith is really in modern science and medicine. Why does the Lord need to work through doctors in order to kill the cancer cells? Where in the Bible does it say that He needs several weeks or months to shrivel up a cancerous tumor?

As we have already seen, according to the Scriptures, that is not the way the Lord operates. His Miracles are instantaneous events which leave absolutely no doubt as to who brought them about. Miracles occur when all other options have failed, and only God can receive the credit and the glory. Furthermore, true Miracles often result in positive fruit for the Kingdom of God. In the Book of Isaiah, the Lord clearly tells us that

His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear, nor His hand short that it cannot save, as we see here:

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"
Isaiah 59:1, KJV

Clearly then, the problem must be with us, and not with the Lord. The problem must be our lack of faith, and not God's ability to heal.

Despite everything that I have shared thus far, there will undoubtedly be some people who will continue to insist that they believe that God uses modern medical professionals in order to perform His Miracles, even though doing so robs Him of the credit. These people will continue to insist that the Lord must operate according to their degree of faith and not according to the excellency of His Power. On the other hand, many of us also have relatives who do not know the Lord as we do. In such cases, perhaps God does not expect as much of them in matters of faith, as He does of us, His own children. In thinking about these situations where our faith is not as strong as it should be, the following two verses immediately come to mind:

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him."
Psalms 103:13, KJV

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."
Mark 9:23-24, KJV

As I point out in other articles, the Lord's Mercy is truly great. I am sure that we can all identify with the poor man in the previous verse when it comes to matters of faith. We really do want to believe in the Lord's promises of healing; and we try to manifest our faith in the same; but sometimes it just isn't there; or it simply just isn't enough. In such cases, just like this man, all we can do is look up into the compassionate eyes of the Lord, and plead with our own eyes and voice, that He will forgive us, have mercy upon us, and not be offended by our lack of faith. We hope that the Lord realizes that we are not purposely trying to displease Him.

Although I cannot prove this point scripturally, perhaps in some rare cases, as a result of the pity and mercy which the Lord has towards us, He actually will reach down and touch a certain operation that is being performed, in order to make sure that it proceeds properly. Perhaps He will even perform a Miracle of Divine Healing, even though He may never get the credit for it. I honestly don't know. As we read in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8-9, KJV

Normally, however, I believe that the Lord holds His children to stricter guidelines concerning matters of faith. We either have faith for healing, or else we don't; and the only way to get it, as the Apostle Paul tells us, is through a diligent

study of God's Word:

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

Romans 10:17, KJV

Faith is simply not something which we can create through any kind of human energy or endeavor. As we have already seen, we can't pretend to have faith when we really don't. Once the precious seed of faith does sprout in our hearts through our study of His Word, the Lord expects us to put our faith into action, as the Apostle James tells us in this verse:

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

James 2:26, KJV

So we have to put our faith into action, and actually prove our faith to the Lord. In the case of Divine Healing, this may require putting ourselves out on the proverbial limb. We have to really be desperate for healing, and put God's Word to the test. As the Lord says through the Prophet Malachi, He expects us to prove Him now. Not only that, but He informs us that blessings are dependent upon our obedience -- in this case, bringing in the tithes first -- as I mentioned earlier:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Malachi 3:10, KJV

Just as God likes us to test Him and to prove the reliability of His Word, He sometimes will also test our faith in order to see how much we really believe in His promises, before He will grant us our petition. We saw an example of this in part one where a woman had an issue of blood for twelve years. As a test of the woman's faith, the Lord asked publicly who had touched Him; and the woman came forth and made a confession of faith. She put her faith into action in two ways; first by reaching to touch the border of Jesus' garment, and then by publicly confessing what she had done. As a result, the Lord openly rewarded her by healing her of her affliction.

Another classic example of irrefutable Divine Healing can be found in a man by the name of Naaman. As I explain in the article "Are The Gifts Of The Spirit For Today?", Naaman was the captain of the army of the king of Syria. His problem is that he suffered from leprosy, as we see here:

"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper."

2 Kings 5:1, KJV

As the story continues to unfold, a young Jewish girl, who was brought as a captive to Syria, and who now serves as a slave to Naaman and his wife, informs Naaman's wife that the Prophet Elisha is in Samaria, and that he could very easily heal Naaman of his affliction, as we see here:

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress,

Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

2 Kings 5:2-3, KJV

In the next scene, with the blessing of the king, as well as with a reward for Elisha the Prophet, Naaman travels down to Israel. Upon hearing Naaman's request, the king of Israel suspects that it is a trap in order to give the Syrian king a good reason to once again wage war against Israel, as we read here:

"And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

2 Kings 5:5-7, KJV

Eventually, Elisha the Prophet receives word of Naaman's request. His response is to send a messenger to the Syrian with the following unusual instructions. As you will see, this was the Lord's test of faith for Naaman:

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

2 Kings 5:10, KJV

Upon hearing the Prophet's unusual message, not only is the Syrian captain of war disappointed, but he is also angry, as he had expected Elisha to come in person and perform a great Miracle for him. He is also upset because Elisha tells him to wash in the Jordan River, instead of in one of the rivers of Syria, as we read here:

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

2 Kings 5:11-12, KJV

After receiving wise counsel from his servants, Naaman the proud warrior finally decides to humble himself, and follows Elisha's instructions by dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River. Upon coming up out of the water the seventh time, he is completely healed of his leprosy, as we see by these verses:

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

2 Kings 5:13-14, KJV

So as you can see, while the Lord may be eager to grant you your petition -- such as a request for Divine Healing -- He may decide to put you to the test first. If you truly have faith in the Promises that are found in His Word, and if you are truly walking uprightly before Him -- blessings depend a lot on our personal obedience to the Lord -- He may indeed choose to heal you. He may grant you the petitions that you desire of Him, if they are good for you, and if they are a part of His Will for your life. Consider the following verses:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

1 John 5:14-15, KJV

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8, KJV

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

James 1:6-7, KJV

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Psalms 37:4, KJV

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

Psalms 34:10, KJV

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Psalms 84:11, KJV

As I stated at the beginning of this series, our pilgrimage on the Earth is but a brief flash on the Eternal Timescale; which is predetermined by God, who made all things for His own glory and pleasure. Whether we live almost a thousand years like the Patriarchs of old, or only sixty to ninety years as at our current time, as the writer of Ecclesiastes informs us, eventually, every one of us will meet the same common destiny -- physical death -- unless of course Jesus should choose to return during our lifetime:

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20, KJV

As we have also seen, it is in these final years just before death comes to greet us, that our "earthen vessel" gives us the most problems. Our clothing of flesh begins to wear out, to become unreliable, and to fall apart. It is at times like these that many people seek medical attention of one kind or another, in order to repair themselves as much as is humanly

possible.

It is just such an incident which motivated me to write the original version of this series in November of 1998. During that year, my own dear paternal grandmother -- who was going on eighty-seven years old at the time -- underwent a series of four hip surgeries. Obviously, the operations were not easy on her tired old body. On one occasion, I was informed that she was very close to death due to severe hemorrhaging. This development resulted in the need for her to receive a blood transfusion. Despite her advanced age, she survived the ordeal, and was sent home to recuperate.

During that period, my grandmother informed a close Christian friend who is a longtime member of our EDGE Mailing List, that she was convinced that it was our prayers which helped her to survive the last operation, as it was extremely difficult for her. Naturally, loving her as I do, I continually uplifted my grandmother in prayer. However, from what I have been told by other members of my family, eventually, the postoperative pain became so unbearable for her -- despite the fact that she was receiving a high dosage of morphine -- that my grandmother passed away in 1999. While I had not see her in twenty-seven years by that time, she was still very close to my heart. My last memories of her are a family video -- now lost due to time and use -- which was made by my younger brother in 1994.

During the time that my grandmother was not faring very well, I suddenly found myself facing a moral dilemma which I had never had to confront before. As I mentioned to another dear Christian friend at the time, and also briefly discuss in the article "Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia, Terminal Sedation", at times it can be very difficult to know exactly how to pray for an individual who is experiencing a lot of physical pain that is caused by some dreadful disease, by an operation, or that's simply due to old age and the symptoms which accompany it. It can also be difficult to know what decisions to make when it comes to palliative care and end-of-life issues when such a person is not able to make the decisions for themself.

My dilemma was this: In the case of excruciating and terminal pain, should we pray for Divine Healing, or should we pray for a more permanent solution by asking the Lord to take that person Home to be with Him? What is really the right thing to do in such a situation? What does the Lord expect us to do?

In her response to my thoughts, my friend related the story of a certain woman -- the pastor's wife as I recall -- who was dying from bone cancer. This poor woman was suffering so much, that the church finally got together and decided that instead of praying for a Miracle of Divine Healing, it would be better to simply pray that the Lord would take the woman Home to be with Him. Although my friend didn't realize it at the time, her words shocked me, and woke me up to a Biblical truth which I had never stopped to consider before. Like a number of my readers, I too have been influenced by former associations in my life. Because of some of the things I had been taught in the past, it seemed quite natural to tell my friend that sometimes we aren't quite sure how to pray for a certain person who is seriously sick and suffering a lot of pain.

I am thankful that the Lord used my friend's comments to stop me in my tracks; and to cause me to really question how I had come to accept such a belief. What I quickly realized is that we don't find any specific examples in the Bible where we are

told to pray for God to take someone Home. I have never found any examples of this type of prayer in the many years that I have been studying the Scriptures. The only thing that even comes remotely close to this, is found in the fifth chapter of the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. In this particular chapter, Paul comments on a serious problem concerning fornication that is occurring in that church. In writing about a certain young man who seems to have engaged in sexual relations with his very own mother, Paul states the following:

"For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

1 Corinthians 5:3-6, KJV

What Paul is saying in the previous verses, is that rather than permit this kind of unbridled sex to run rampant in the church's midst, like yeast in a loaf of bread, it is better to rebuke such a proud, uncontrollable person, and if need be, to commit them to the Wrath of God -- via Satan -- even if it results in the destruction of their physical body. In this way, that person will be delivered from their sins of the flesh, and the church will be spared from further sexual promiscuity occurring within the congregation. As you can plainly see, this situation is a far cry from instructing us to pray that the elderly and the sick will be delivered from their afflictions through death.

Please go to part four for the continuation of this series.

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DEATH : FINAL BATTLE, FINAL VICTORY! : PART 4

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Incident With Samaritan Village, Animosity Between Samaritans And Jews Of Judah, God's Patience And Desire For Salvation, Salvation Of Both Body And Spirit, Lazarus Is Raised From The Dead, Jesus Is The Resurrection And The Life, Jesus Heals The Nobleman's Son, Let It Rather Be Healed, Miracle At The Pool Of Bethesda, With God All Things Are Possible, Commit Your Seriously Afflicted Loved Ones To The Lord, God's Will Takes Precedence, David And Bathsheba Commit Adultery, A Matter Of Perspective, God's Sovereignty In All Things, Perspective Of The Sick, Weirdness Of Praying For Someone's Death, Absent From The Body & Present With The Lord, Spiritual Euthanasia, Dying With Dignity, Unbearable Pain, What To Pray For Loved Ones, Miserable, Meaningless Life Without Hope, Fear Of Death

Continuing our discussion from part three, in another example that is found in the Gospel of Luke, when a certain village of the Samaritans refused to accept Jesus and His followers, because it appeared that He was more interested in going to Jerusalem, two of Jesus' Disciples -- James and John -- then questioned whether they should call fire down from the sky in order to destroy them, just as the Prophet Elijah called fire from the sky and destroyed the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal in the Old Testament. The Lord was not the least bit pleased with their harsh attitude, and He quickly rebuked James and John for their unloving thoughts, as we see by these verses:

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."
Luke 9:51-56, KJV

In case you are wondering why the Samaritans behaved in this manner, as I point out in other articles, it is more than likely because of the strong animosity which existed between the people of northern Israel -- or Samaria -- and the Jews of Judah and Benjamin. The Jews of Judah -- where Jerusalem was located -- in fact viewed the Samaritans as lower class Jews because of their mixed blood, which resulted from the Assyrians and other foreign invaders. It is for this very reason that in the story that is found in John chapter four concerning the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman said the following to Jesus:

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."
John 4:9, KJV

To continue, the Lord's response to James and John makes it perfectly clear what kind of an attitude He expects us to have. He said "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them". As I have pointed out before, God goes to great lengths in order to try to win the rebellious and wayward people of Earth. He knows how tragic, and how horrible, it will be to see them eternally destroyed in the Lake of Fire. Thus, He tries to manifest His love, and even His existence, in as many ways as possible; yet in ways which still require that we exercise our personal faith. The reason He does this, is because He truly loves us, and He wants us to be with Him for eternity. In speaking of God's patience, and His desire for our Salvation, the Apostle Peter writes as follows:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

As we have already seen, throughout the four Gospels we find many clear examples where the Lord's salvation did not just include Salvation of one's spirit, but it also included the salvation of their flesh as well through deliverance from a wide variety of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical afflictions. God's Word always encourages us to pray for the healing of the Lord's children. We never find Jesus praying to His Father to take anyone Home. We never see the Apostles or Disciples praying in this fashion either.

When Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, became very sick, Mary and Martha did not pray for God to take Lazarus Home to be with Him so that their brother would no longer have to suffer; rather, they sent a message to Jesus saying "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." In other words, their expectation was that Jesus would immediately come and heal Lazarus of his affliction. If you are familiar with the story in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John, then you will know that while Jesus did eventually go to see Mary and Martha, He waited until several days after Lazarus had died, in order that the Glory of God might be revealed through the wondrous Miracle that He would perform when He raised Lazarus from the dead.

Of course, as we are told in John chapter eleven, the reason why Jesus performed this Miracle was to prove that He indeed has power over both life and death, because He is in fact the Resurrection and the Life, as we see by these verses:

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

John 11:25-26, KJV

In like manner, in John chapter four, when the son of the nobleman from Capernaum became extremely sick, so much so that we are told that he was near the point of death, his father didn't pray that God would take his son Home to be with Him in order to free him of his suffering. Rather, the Bible informs us that the nobleman sought out Jesus; and when he found the Lord, he said to him "Sir, come down ere my child die." Following is the full story:

"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second Miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee."

John 4:46-54, KJV

So these are but two clear-cut Scriptural examples where a loved one was sick unto death, and yet, rather than pray that they would be relieved of their suffering and taken Home to Heaven, their families actually sought out Jesus and prayed for the healing of their family members. This is the attitude that we should have today, and it is also what was taught by the First Century Apostles. For example, consider what James wrote in his Epistle:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

James 5:14-16, KJV

Even when our Heavenly Father finds it necessary to chastise us as a result of our sins, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that His ultimate goal is that we should be spiritually healed of our rebellion, and return to Him, as we see by these verses:

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Hebrews 12:11-13, KJV

Please notice that he concludes by saying "but let it rather be healed", just as James writes "that ye may be healed". So it seems rather clear that if we are going to pray for others, then the best thing to pray for is both their spiritual and their physical healing, and not for their deliverance from this life through death. God has His own timetable for each individual person, and we would be rather foolish to tamper with it by praying for death to come to someone. On a related note, I also discuss the controversial topic of committing suicide in the series "Heavens Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults", for those of you who may be interested in reading it.

Even when people have been sick for many years -- perhaps even for decades -- with no earthly hope for recovery, the Bible still encourages us to pray positive words of faith, and to expect the impossible. We find a number of examples in the New Testament, where despite the odds being against them, God came through in the final hour after a great test of faith, so that He might be glorified.

Everyone -- including the legalistic, self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees -- were aware of the fact that these people had been sick for many years, so there was no way that they could deny the Power of God. They were forced to acknowledge the Power which resided in Jesus Christ, as well as in His Disciples. Earlier we looked at the example of the woman who suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years. In another example of a long-term affliction, in the Gospel of John, we find the following wonderful Miracle that occurred at the Pool of Bethesda:

"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which

is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."

John 5:2-9, KJV

Imagine the shock and the wonder which must have quickly travelled throughout Jerusalem that day. Here was a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Literally thousands of people must have known him, and must have seen him laying helplessly by the Pool of Bethesda, while others quickly and selfishly rushed by him in their attempt to be the first one into the pool when the water was stirred. It was a hopeless situation. There was no way that he would ever be healed. He may have laid there waiting for another thirty-eight years; but this was not God's plan.

This miraculous account -- and many others similar to it -- emphasizes a very important lesson from which we can all benefit. This lesson is best expressed in the words of the Angel Gabriel, when he informed young Mary that her cousin Elisabeth was six months pregnant in her old age. This same lesson was also emphasized by Jesus on different occasions. Consider the following verses:

"For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Luke 1:37, KJV

"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26, KJV

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Mark 9:23, KJV

"And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

Mark 10:27, KJV

"And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Mark 14:36, KJV

Our God is a God of impossibilities. As we have already seen, He delights in coming through when all hope is lost, so that He alone may receive the glory. We need to remember that as long as there is life, there is hope; so we should never give up; whether we are praying for someone's spiritual Salvation, or for the physical salvation of their body through a Miracle of Divine Healing.

As we saw earlier in this series, it is these very Miracles

of Healing which serve as powerful manifestations of God's Spirit, and which often lead new people to believe in Jesus Christ. Now, if a certain person is suffering a lot, and if our faith is not what it should be, so that we are not sure if we have the faith to claim Divine Healing, the next best thing would be to simply pray that God's Will will be done, whatever it may happen to be. In other words, simply commit the seriously afflicted to the Lord. If they are suffering unbearably, and/or at a very advanced age, then the Lord may choose to reveal His Compassion and Mercy by taking them to be with Him anyway; and thus give them a complete healing. However, to remove someone from this life is His choice to make, and not ours to make by praying for someone's death.

While we should always hope and pray for the best outcome in any given situation, let me reiterate again that it is wise to temper our personal expectations with the knowledge that ultimately, the Will of God will prevail. This is a key point to remember. God's Will must, and will always, take precedence over our own desires, and even over the desires of the person who is afflicted. As we discussed earlier, God alone is the one who determines who lives and who dies, and not us. This point is made rather clear in the following verses that are found in the fourth chapter of the Epistle of James:

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."
James 4:13-16, KJV

You will notice that the Apostle James writes "If the Lord will, we shall live". That is the kind of attitude we should have. This is how we should likewise pray for our sick loved ones; that is, that God's Will will be done.

In the Old Testament we discover that King David had the same attitude and recognized God's Sovereignty in all things. Many of you are no doubt familiar with the story of how King David lusted after beautiful Bathsheba, who was the wife of Uriah the Hittite. In the eleventh chapter of the second Book of Samuel, we discover that King David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Upon learning that she was with child by him, and unable to cover his sin by having Uriah lay with her, David purposely ordered Uriah to be sent to the front lines of the battle against the Ammonites, where he would be killed, which he indeed was. David then took Bathsheba to be one of his wives.

After Bathsheba gave birth to their first child, God revealed David's sins of adultery and murder to the Prophet Nathan who then rebuked David. Part of the Lord's judgment against David was that the child became very sick. In the following scene, we find the Lord rebuking David through the Prophet Nathan:

"Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of

his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him."

2 Samuel 12:14-24, KJV

Notice King David's attitude. He said in part "Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?". As I stated earlier, what David is basically saying here is that while there is life, there is still hope; so we should keep on praying as we honestly don't know what the Will of the Lord may be. David knew that Nathan had prophesied that the child would die, yet he never lost faith; he just kept on praying for God's Mercy, and hoping for a Miracle of healing, just in case the Lord decided to change His mind; which in this case He did not. In the end, David accepted the child's death as God's Sovereign Will, and His judgment against him as a result of his sins.

This is another key point that we all need to recognize. In other words, what we may consider to be a good outcome to our prayers from a human perspective, and what God may consider to be a good outcome from a Divine Perspective, may be two very different things. God knows the future while we do not. He knows what lies ahead for each one of His children; and based upon what He knows, He may determine that one outcome is better than another. That is why I stated that we need to temper our personal expectations, and make certain that we recognize God's Sovereignty in all things.

Suppose, for example, that you are praying for someone who is gravely ill. In agreement with the Scriptures, you're praying for this person's recovery. However, rather than get better, they grow progressively worse, and eventually die. Does this mean that God didn't hear your prayers? Does the fact that the person died mean that you simply didn't have enough faith for a Miracle of Divine Healing? Should the person's death be viewed as a bad outcome? The answer to all of these questions may be "no". Perhaps God simply knew something regarding that situation which you didn't know, and He determined that it was better to take that person Home. So here again we see God's Sovereign Will in action.

If you still doubt that praying for life, rather than for

death, is the proper attitude that we Christians should have regarding our sick loved ones, then let's look at this issue from another perspective; that is, from the viewpoint of the sick or elderly person. What I am about to share with you may cause you to pause and think.

Imagine for a moment that you are an elderly person who is sick and dying. You realize that your time may be drawing near, but maybe, in spite of your deteriorating condition, you're just not quite ready to go yet. Maybe there are still some things you need to say to a few people; or perhaps you get a sudden burst of will to continue living. That being the case, consider how you would personally feel if in your heart you are praying "Lord, please don't take me Home yet; I am not quite ready to leave this life yet"; while your well-meaning family or church is praying "Lord, please take this person Home to be with You. Please deliver them from all of their pain and suffering. It would be better for them".

I honestly don't know anyone who would be encouraged to know that other people -- their loved ones and friends no less -- are actually praying for their death; do you? Just thinking about this kind of situation strikes me as being quite weird. While it is indeed true that the Apostle Paul wrote that "to be absent from the body" is "to be present with the Lord" -- please refer to 2 Corinthians 5:8 -- nevertheless, that still doesn't justify any Christian praying for the death of their loved one, so that they can escape from their pain. In a sense, to do so would be committing "spiritual euthanasia", which is nowhere to be found in the Bible.

At the same time, we can reverse the above situation. Let us again assume that you are the elderly sick person.

You have finally decided that you have had enough. You cannot endure any more pain and suffering. It is a total nightmare to even be alive. Your poor aching body is continually being subjected to all kinds of injections by concerned nurses who are desperately striving to keep you alive so the hospital won't be sued for malpractice. You have an array of IV's and other tubes going into various parts of your body which make you quite uncomfortable. Half of the time you must wear an oxygen mask just to stay alive. You continually float in and out of consciousness. Your temperature rises and falls, and you experience hot spells and then chills. You can hardly keep anything in your sick stomach because of the nausea you experience due to chemotherapy. It is humiliating that you can't use the restroom on your own. And having to wear the hospital gown is a total embarrassment to say the least.

So you have had it. You finally say, "Lord, I honestly can't take this anymore. I am really tired of this life. My body is just too sick and old, and I can't endure any more pain and suffering. Please Lord, have mercy on me. Please deliver me from all of this misery."

While you are praying for God's deliverance from your current misery, unbeknownst to you, your well-meaning family has had you declared mentally incompetent. They have decided that you have lost your mind, and that you really don't know what you are asking for when you tell the doctors to disconnect all of the tubes, and to turn off all of the machines. Your plea to die with dignity is ignored. Due to their own selfish desires to keep your old bag of flesh alive for a while longer, simply because they cannot bear the pain to see you go, your family

has taken away your right to die as you wish. Against your wishes, and maybe even against God's Will, they are praying, "Lord, please help grandma. Please help her to get better. Please don't take her from us yet, Lord."

As you can no doubt see, knowing how to pray for someone who is experiencing a lot of pain, and facing life-threatening circumstances is not always an easy task. We find ourselves caught in a situation where three factors must be considered. First there is God's Will. Then there is the will of the sick person. Finally, there are our own desires for our loved one. So how do we react? What do we do? How should we pray? While I have never been in that kind of a situation, where a loved one is in prolonged, extreme pain, I do know that it's a very difficult position to be in. I was told a number of years ago that when my grandmother was in severe pain just prior to her death, my uncle suffered considerably, being as he spent the most time at her bedside and thus witnessed her ongoing agony.

So to reiterate my earlier position, the best advice that I can personally offer to anyone who happens to find themselves in that kind of a difficult situation is the following: If you honestly don't know what to pray, or how to pray for a particular loved one, then the best thing to do is to simply pray that God's Will will be done, whatever it may happen to be. Just pray a generic prayer such as "Lord, I really don't know what Your Will is for this person, but I commit their life into Your Hands to do with as You best see fit." Just acknowledge the Lord, recognize His Sovereignty over life and death, and then be at peace about it. In the Old Testament, we find such verses as the following:

"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."
Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

"Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."
Psalms 37:5, KJV

While we Christians have faith and hope in the Resurrection of the Dead, and look forward to an Afterlife in the Kingdom of our Heavenly Father and His Son once we leave our vessels of the flesh behind, sadly, in the world today, there are still many people who are as we once were; that is, without hope. Not only do they have very little hope in this current life, but even worse, they have absolutely no hope or belief in an Afterlife. Personally, I don't know how they can bear to live that way. Such an existence would be meaningless, as well as miserable and depressing. The Apostle Paul understood this human tragedy quite well, which is apparently why he wrote verses such as the following:

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"
Ephesians 2:12, KJV

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."
1 Thessalonians 4:13, KJV

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

1 Corinthians 15:19, KJV

It truly saddens me to know that there are so many hopeless, miserable, unsaved people living in the world today. But what I consider even more tragic is the fact that quite a few of these people are this way by their own proud choice. As I explain in such articles as "Dracula: Fighting Fear With The Word, Faith And Love", and "The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love", perhaps one of the greatest fears in the world of unsaved people, is the fear of death. Some people live their entire lives in fear and torment, wondering how they are going to die, when they are going to die, where they are going to die, and what will happen to them after they die. They also worry about the pain and suffering which may accompany their death.

As the years pass by, and they grow older and their bodies begin to break down, these fears take an even stronger hold on them. If only they would realize that much of their fear could easily be avoided, if they would just stop and accept God's Gift of Love into their lives, and allow the Lord to turn their lives around. People who suffer from these fears could be completely delivered from them in a moment, if they would only accept the Son of God who has already overcome both fear and death by confronting them face to face on the Cross. Sadly, in their own pride and arrogance, many people simply refuse to do this. In their own folly and rebellion, they prefer to live their meaningless existences which are full of hopelessness, misery and despair, rather than come to the marvellous Light of Jesus Christ.

Please go to part five for the conclusion of this series.

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DEATH : FINAL BATTLE, FINAL VICTORY! : PART 5

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Jesus Became Like Us So That One Day We Can Become Like Him, Lifelong Bondage Due To Their Fear Of Death, We Have Overcome By Faith Because Jesus Has Already Overcome Death And Satan, God's Love Towards Humanity, God Patiently Waits For Us To Repent Of Our Sins, Salvation Is A Free Gift Through Christ, Fear Is Not Of God, Peace Which Passes All Understanding, Fear Hath Torment, Servants Of Sin And Death, Freed From Sin And Death By Jesus Christ, Firstfruits Of The Resurrection, Keys Of Death And Hell And Key Of David, Final Victory Over The Sting Of Death, Death And Hell Are Destroyed, Description Of Our Glorified Resurrection Bodies, Closing Remarks

In discussing the importance of the Sacrifice of Christ in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and how He became one of us, in order that one day we may become like Him, for the which He is not ashamed to call us His brethren, the Apostle Paul

mentions these sad people who are in bondage all of their lives because of their fear of death. Paul wrote as follows:

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Hebrews 2:9-15, KJV

To those of you who currently find yourselves trapped in such a miserable, hopeless condition, you need to realize that your fear of death is totally unnecessary. There is a wonderful deliverance to be had from death, and from the fear of death, for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Word plainly informs us, Jesus already overcame death, and Satan, two thousand years ago when He freely gave His Life on the Cross for the sins of the world. As a result, we have already overcome by faith, because He has already overcome. The Apostle John tells us that this is our victory, even our faith. Please consider the following verses that are found in the New Testament:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33, KJV

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

1 John 4:4, KJV

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Revelation 12:11, KJV

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

1 John 5:4, KJV

This victory can be yours as well. To grasp it, you need to begin by recognizing God's Love for you. Contrary to what is often promoted by hard-hearted unbelievers, God is not just some monster who is waiting to strike you down the minute that you cross Him. The truth is that He loves you very much; so much so that He was willing to sacrifice His own Son for your sake. Consider these sample verses:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16, KJV

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8, KJV

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

1 John 3:16, KJV

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39, KJV

Furthermore, you need to place your faith in God's Word -- that is, in the Bible -- believe what it says, admit your sinful condition, repent of your sins, and receive God's Forgiveness through accepting the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the only valid Atonement for your sins. The Apostle Peter informs us that God patiently waits for each of us to take these necessary steps. If we do this, we will be granted the Gift of Eternal Life through Jesus Christ. Please consider the following verses which validate these points:

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Psalms 51:5, KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 3:10, 23, KJV

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9, KJV

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:9-10, KJV

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Revelation 3:20, KJV

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 14:6, KJV

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:37, KJV

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:28, KJV

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

John 17:1-2, KJV

If you take the aforementioned steps in your life, not only will you receive God's free Gift of Eternal Life, but your current fears will simply dissipate. Why? Because the Love of God, and the intense Light of His Word, will simply melt away the dark clouds of fear which Satan has placed in your mind and heart. That is what you need to recognize. Your fears -- including the fear of death -- are not of God. They are born of Satan. Finally, upon recognizing how much God loves and cares for you, you will be filled with His Peace which passes all understanding. Please consider the following verses:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

2 Timothy 1:7, KJV

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

1 John 4:18, KJV

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27, KJV

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:7, KJV

Please notice that similar to the Apostle Paul, John states in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle that people whose lives are full of fear experience torment. More specifically, John says "fear hath torment". Because unbelievers don't know the Lord, and because they face an unknown future, they tend to suffer emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Their lives can be a living hell, because they have unwittingly allowed themselves to become the servants of him who watches over the gates of death and hell; that is, Satan himself. This is made clear in the following verses:

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

2 Peter 2:19, KJV

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Romans 6:16, KJV

So if you wish to be freed from the bondage of Satan, sin and death; if you want the darkness in your life to be replaced by the Light and Love of God; if you desire the peace which passes all understanding, then please accept Jesus Christ in your life today. He alone can set you free from all of these things, because He alone possesses the keys of death and hell, the Key of David, and can unlock the prison doors which have kept you bound. As Jesus tells us, He is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life. He is in fact the Resurrection

and the Life, and if you believe in Him, one of these days, even though your body may experience physical death, we have the promise of Eternal Life in new Resurrected Bodies which will never perish, and we will be just like Jesus, who is the Firstfruits of the Resurrection. Consider the following verses which verify all of these points:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
John 8:31-32, KJV

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."
Romans 8:29, KJV

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."
1 Corinthians 15:19-23, KJV

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature . . . And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."
Colossians 1:12-15, 18, KJV

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood . . . 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."
Revelation 1:5, 18, KJV

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;"
Revelation 3:7, KJV

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."
Matthew 4:14-16, KJV

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."
Luke 4:18-19, KJV

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

Revelation 22:16, KJV

In conclusion, when the time eventually arrives that we are called to surrender this earthly tabernacle of the flesh, whether it be through accident, sickness or old age, let us all do it joyfully, and not with fear or with sad hearts; knowing that even if we are called Home before the Great Day of His Arrival, death cannot possibly hold us down; because the sting of death has already been destroyed by Him who holds the keys of death and hell, and the Key of David, as we see by these verses:

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

1 Corinthians 15:23-26, KJV

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 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."

1 Corinthians 15:54-57, KJV

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Revelation 20:13-14, KJV

We shall indeed rise again; and not only shall we rise, but we shall rise in wonderful, glorified Resurrection Bodies, over which neither sickness nor death will ever have any hold or power again! We shall shed this body of corruption, and put on Eternal Bodies of incorruption; and we shall be exactly as Jesus now is, and we shall see Him as He truly is. Consider the following inspiring verses which describe our miraculous transformation and our Resurrection Bodies:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, KJV

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, KJV

"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."

Philippians 3:20-21, KJV

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John 3:2, KJV

"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. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

2 Corinthians 5:1-4, KJV

With these wonderfully inspiring verses, I will bring this series to a close. I pray that it has been a blessing and an encouragement in your life. Please keep your eyes on Jesus! "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life", He tells us. Are you ready?

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