

WHY DOESN'T GOD HEAL ME? : PART 1

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Bodily Afflictions, Remain Positive And Joyful In The Midst Of Temptation Adversity And Affliction, Count Your Blessings, My Infant Accident, My Lifelong Afflictions, Cruelty And Mean Jokes, Childhood Accidents: Broken Leg, Empty Punching Bag, Bicycle Accident, Basketball Accident, Close To Drowning In The Ohio River, God's Mercy On Me, We Are All Preordained By God's Design, Moses Hesitates To Be God's Prophet In Egypt, Our Common Afflictions And Temptations, Weak For His Glory, Beware Of The Dangers Of Pride, We Are Nothing Without God's Anointing, Holy Spirit Is Our Treasure In Earthen Vessels

A number of years ago a young Christian friend wrote to me regarding certain questions he had concerning his physical ailments, and the possibilities of having them rectified by means of modern science and medicine. It seems that this dear brother was born prematurely. As a result of this, he suffers from certain physical limitations. This includes one eye which is totally blind, and the other having very poor vision; thus resulting in his need to use strong corrective lenses.

One thing which amazes me is that over the years I have come to realize that there are many Christians in the world -- I include myself in this group -- who are rather pitiful when it comes to the flesh. We suffer from a rather wide range of physical problems. This includes chronic migraine headaches, problems with our backs, partial or full loss of sight or hearing, digestive problems, polio, issues with our hearts, leukemia and other forms of cancer, Alzheimer's disease and dementia, neurological disorders, missing some or all of our limbs, and much more. Some of us are simply a wreck in the flesh.

Despite these physical challenges that we each face, unlike many worldly people who are quick to curse God, or at least to question His existence, Wisdom and Power when they become afflicted with such personal health problems, we Christians continue to love Jesus, praise His Name and endeavor to obey His Word. Many unspiritual people of the world simply cannot understand this positive attitude and behavior on our part. To some of these people, our outlook borders on lunacy. We have every reason to be pessimists, and to complain and be disheartened, and yet by God's Grace we strive to do just the opposite.

If I were a child of the world, maybe I would remind them of the ancient proverb which says "I complained because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet". While this ancient adage has been attributed to many different sources, it seems that the oldest source appears to be Arabic in origin. As you no doubt realize, the lesson from this saying is that there is

always someone who finds themselves in a worse situation than we are. As such, we should be thankful and count our blessings. From a Scriptural perspective, I am reminded of the following words that were written by the Apostle Paul in his second Epistle to the Corinthians:

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."
2 Corinthians 12:7-10, KJV

I am also reminded of the following verses which are found in the first chapter of the Epistle of James, where similar to the Apostle Paul, James also admonishes us to be joyful when we find ourselves in the midst of temptation, adversity and affliction, and to accept the challenge of our faith:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."
James 1:2-3, KJV

While my personal health situation is not nearly as bad as some other dear Christian friends with whom I have had the pleasure of making an acquaintance, over the years I too have had my share of battles in the flesh, and I continue to experience some of them to this very day. Hoping not to bore you, allow me to share some of my experiences with you. If anything, perhaps my account will help you to understand how hard Satan has tried to slow me down and hinder me over the years, and prevent me from serving the Lord.

My very first battle occurred when I was just over one month old. At that particular time I suffered a mysterious accident -- I describe it as "mysterious" because to this day, I still do not know what caused it -- which resulted in an extended stay at the local hospital for my first six months of life. As a result of the accident, I developed water on the brain, which made it necessary for the doctors to cut open and lift up my skull in two places, in order to remove the fluid, and thus reduce the dangerous pressure which was beginning to build up inside of my head.

As a result of that long ago operation, to this day, I still have two noticeable indentations; one on each side of my head. In fact, I possess an old black and white photograph which was taken during that time, of a very wide-eyed little boy with his head completely wrapped in bandages, being held up by a nurse. You can view the photo in the albums section of my Facebook page at the following URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/wordweaver.evangelist>

Since that time so many years ago -- I'll be a sexagenarian

next year -- I have developed a variety of other physical ailments and bodily deficiencies as well. While none of them are really life-threatening, they do hinder me in different ways.

At the age of six, as a result of suffering from astigmatism -- a condition where the cornea is not spherically curved as it should be, thus resulting in image distortion -- and also being nearsighted, I began wearing corrective lenses, and I have been forced to wear them daily ever since. Well, to be honest, I have been rebellious in more recent years, but not without reason. In my forties I began using bifocals because my long range vision and my short range vision began going their separate ways. In other words, I could no longer wear glasses that had just the one lens. For those of you who may not be familiar with them, bifocals are glasses which have different magnifications on the top and bottom portions of the lens; one for long range vision, and the other for short range vision.

However, a number of years ago -- I can't remember how long ago it was now -- my eyes apparently flip-flopped so that my long range vision and my short range vision reversed, and the bifocals became quite useless. I could no longer use them to do work on my computer, or to read anything either, because everything was blurry, regardless of which lens I choose to look through, top or bottom. So, for quite some time now, I have not even worn them. Instead, I have the font in my text editor set to twenty-four point so that I can accomplish my work for the Lord. I am also forced to magnify the text on web browser pages when I surf the web. Naturally, my eyes are strained all the time.

From the time that I was a teenager -- it may have started a lot earlier -- I have also suffered from kyphosis. This is an abnormal outward curvature of the spine -- or hunchback -- which frequently results in a lot of pain in my back, pelvis and legs. It also prevents me from standing on my feet for long periods of time. Ten minutes is about my limit. Sadly, my daughter seems to have inherited this affliction from me, just as I must have inherited it from my mother, who wore a back brace, according to my father.

For decades now, I have also experienced digestive problems, so that I can only sleep on my left side, lest I develop a serious case of heartburn. I can only sleep on my right side when my stomach is empty. While I have never discussed this problem with a doctor, my personal diagnosis is that there may be something wrong with my lower esophageal sphincter -- a small one-way valve that is located between the esophagus and the stomach -- which is resulting in GE Reflux; that is, gastroesophageal reflux. In short, my stomach content seems to be backing up into my esophagus when it isn't supposed to be doing that; possibly due to a loose or weak valve.

From the time that I was a teenager I have also suffered from chronic migraine headaches. I suspect that some of these may be aggravated by -- and perhaps even brought on by -- my back problems. Sometimes my migraines can endure for several days at a time. In severe cases -- thankfully, they seem to have been mitigated in recent years -- I am so incapacitated that all I can do is lay in bed until the migraine passes, however

long it takes.

For many years now I have refused to take medicine; not even regular pain relievers such as Aspirin and Tylenol; because I simply do not like to knowingly put foreign chemicals in my body, which do who-knows-what. As it is, most of us consume alarming amounts of chemical contaminants in our daily food intake, and perhaps in our water as well. It may surprise some of you to know that I don't even have a regular doctor. Other than periodic visits to the dentist's office every few years or so, I haven't seen a regular doctor since the early 1990's. While I have my share of bodily afflictions, none of them have ever been serious enough to require assistance from a doctor, and I'm very thankful for that. Hopefully, the Lord will continue to be merciful to me as I enter my sixties, and I will be able to continue to avoid the doctor's office as much as possible.

Approximately twenty years ago I also developed ulnar nerve entrapment -- it is either Guyon's canal syndrome or cubital tunnel syndrome, I am really not certain -- in my left arm and hand. This is a neural problem similar to carpal tunnel syndrome, which is characterized by certain fingers tingling and becoming numb. There have been rare occasions when my entire hand will become numb; sometimes to the point where I cannot use it to grasp anything. Neither can I sleep with my hands on my chest, being as they will also go numb if I do so.

As a result of the aforementioned afflictions, I also suffer from sleep deprivation, and I am usually only able to sleep for two to four hours at a time. On rare occasions I am able to sleep longer if I am extremely tired. However, even then, seven or eight hours of straight sleep is rare. Quite often I will wake up with an upset stomach, a sore back, a headache, or with numb hands, and sometimes with a combination of any of the four. Thankfully, being as I am no longer employed at a 9 to 5 job, I have the liberty to sleep whenever I feel the need to do so. There are also the longtime bladder problems which likewise contribute to my lack of sleep.

In addition to the aforementioned health issues, for a number of years now, I have also suffered from frequent and painful muscle cramps in either of my feet. I am not sure what causes them -- I suspect that my feet get cold, or that I stretch my legs in the wrong way -- but quite often these cramps are so painful that I have to cry out to the Lord to stop them, as I massage my feet in an attempt to reduce the level of pain. It is just that unbearable.

My dental health is also quite poor, and I have slowly been losing my teeth since the age of twenty-one. At this current time, approximately half of my teeth are already missing, and of those that remain, quite a few of them are in serious need of fillings or extraction. However, being as I am quite poor, and do not possess any health insurance at this current time, much-needed dental care has been on hold for a while now. Of course, this also contributes to my frequent headaches.

If you add to the aforementioned health issues the fact that I am quite thin -- some people would undoubtedly say that I am dreadfully underweight, which is true -- you will quickly

come to realize that I'm not exactly one of humanity's finer specimens. When I was a young boy -- and even a teenager for that matter -- my own brother, as well as acquaintances at school, would make fun of me because I was so thin. I would often hear the standard jokes such as "Turn sideways and you will disappear"; or "Hold on to a rock, or you will blow away on a windy day." Young kids can be so cruel to each other. It should come as no surprise to you then that I withdrew into a shell, and lived within my own world of reading books, taking lone trips into the woods, and doing other things that lonely and introverted kids like to do.

Aside from all of the above, as a young boy, I experienced the usual scratches and bumps that children my age face. When I was around six years old -- give or take a few years -- I broke my leg when I fell down a flight of stairs in our home. At that time, doctors still made house calls; and I can still remember -- although rather vaguely -- how the doctor had to reset my leg and put it into a cast on the kitchen table as my mother looked on. My left leg grew a little shorter as a result of the accident, and I suspect that eventually, it may have contributed to some degree to my back problems as well.

Due to a number of accidents -- which were sometimes a result of my own foolishness and disobedience -- by the time that I reached my teenage years, I had already had about eighty-two stitches placed in different areas of my head and face. This resulted mainly from three incidents.

On one particular occasion, when I was less than ten years old, my parents bought us a punching bag with a metal stand and base. As I recall, my brother said or did something to anger me, and so I hit the bag. However, the problem is that at that particular time, the punching bag was deflated. As a result, it flipped upside-down, and the metal base smacked me right in the forehead, leaving a bloody gash. So, off to the hospital we went for stitches. Kids, don't try this at home.

A number of years later, after our family had moved into my grandparents' house that was situated high above the railroad tracks in the Ohio River Valley, I suffered a serious bicycle accident. I believe that I was already a young teenager when this particular accident occurred. As I recall, it was during the Summer. My dad was at work, and my mother had apparently gone out to do something. While I had been instructed to stay at home, one of my few friends stopped by and invited me to go bicycle riding with him. Boys will be boys, and so I took off with my friend.

My friend took me to a long, steep, winding, asphalt-covered road that was located near our old elementary school. I was not familiar with the road, and it was full of potholes. Even though I had never biked on the road before, I went ahead and began to follow my friend. It proved to be a serious mistake. Due to the slope of the road, and my extremely light weight, I was not able to apply enough pressure to the break pedal, and within minutes I lost control of the bike as it sped down the hill. My friend was unaware of my trouble, as he was far ahead of me.

Everything happened so quickly. Apparently, I must have hit a pothole and fell off of the bicycle. However, my shirt became

caught in the wheel, or perhaps in the gears and chain. As a result, as the bike sped down the pothole-filled hill, I was being dragged along with it, my head repeatedly banging into the asphalt pavement. I assume that the bicycle and I finally came to a stop. Even though there was no traffic on the road, a solitary car came by, and a kindhearted, total stranger put me in the back seat and took me to the hospital. Due to my grave condition, I really don't remember much, other than the fact that I was groaning a lot, that he wrapped my head in my shirt, and that there was a lot of blood all over his car.

As a result of the bicycle accident, my head and back were injured quite a bit. I have no recollection of what happened in the hospital. Perhaps I passed out, or maybe they put me under. At any rate, I received forty new stitches in my head, to add to those I had already received years earlier when I had my accident as an infant. I do recall that following the bicycle accident, neither of my parents ever scolded me, even though I really deserved it. Perhaps they realized that the experience had taught me an important lesson about obedience. I really don't know.

The third accident which resulted in my receiving stitches on my face occurred during my high school days. As I mention in other articles, I have never really liked playing sports; and this included high school sports such as football, basketball and baseball. I never got near football; I always struck out at baseball; and I never learned how to dribble a basketball. In fact, I was afraid of sports, because I simply didn't want to get hurt. Phys. Ed. -- or what we called gym class -- just was not my thing. I could do a few of the calisthenics, but I was so weak and feeble that I couldn't even do chin-ups fully or properly. I wasn't much better at doing push-ups either.

While I purposely avoided participating in gym class as much as I possibly could, preferring instead to study my books, one of my high school gym teachers had other ideas. One day he forced me to engage in a game of basketball, which I did not -- and still do not -- know how to play. I really don't know what he was thinking. Perhaps he thought that he was doing me a favor. What a mistake that turned out to be! For some odd reason, one of the players decided to pass me the ball. Within seconds, I had guys all over me. The weight of their bodies was such, that my upper front teeth cut right through my chin, just below my lower lip, and left a gash clear into the inside of my mouth.

Once again I was a bloody mess. The school called up my dad who was at work, who then came and took me to the hospital. That resulted in seven stitches in my chin, as I recall. As you can imagine, that high school sports accident seriously traumatized me. From that point on, I refused to participate in gym class. I did not care if the gym teacher flunked me for the year. I was not going to play any more sports, and I didn't. While he could have flunked me, the teacher showed me a little mercy and gave me a "C" instead; but even that brought down my grade point average for the year.

So between having my head cut open as an infant and receiving many stitches at that time, having my forehead stitched up as a result of the punching bag incident, receiving an additional forty stitches in my head as a result of the bicycle accident,

and having my chin stitched up due to the basketball game in which I should have never been forced to participate, I think that my poor head and face have been banged up enough.

One thing I do know is that God has been merciful to me, and that for His reasons, He has chosen to spare my life since I was a baby. One other incident worth mentioning here -- which even my parents never knew about -- is that on one occasion, when I was a teenager, I almost drowned in the Ohio River.

Being natives of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area, for quite a number of years, our family lived downstream from where the Allegheny River and the Monongahela River join together to form the Ohio River. The current in the Ohio River is rather swift. I imagine that this is particularly so when the winter snow begins to melt, the cold Spring rains arrive, and the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers begin to swell. At its deepest points, the Ohio River has a depth of from seventeen to twenty feet. Thus, it is considered a shallow river. It is also a tributary of the Mississippi River.

When we were young boys, my dad used to take us down to the Ohio River on weekends to catch carp, catfish, blue gills, sunfish and perch. From my boyhood home that was located on the slope of one of the hills that overlooked the Ohio River Valley, we could see the train yard and the Ohio River below. In fact, whenever the train cars were locked together, it would create a very loud noise which would echo throughout the valley. We used to sit on a wooden bench on our street which overlooked the valley, and watch the activity in the train yard below. The balcony on our two-story wooden house also faced the valley, so we could see things from there as well.

As we grew older and became teenagers, we were allowed to go fishing on our own. On one particular occasion, a few of the guys were swimming by a wooden dock that was located near one of our favorite fishing places. Even though I didn't know how to swim, they invited me into the water. That meant stripping off our clothes except for our underwear. Against my better judgment, I accepted their invitation and joined them in the water. However, I clung to the ladder that went down from the dock into the water.

I don't remember exactly how it happened, but I decided to see how far down the ladder extended into the water. Somehow I let go of it. By the time I realized what had actually happened, I had already begun to drift away from the ladder. I was fully submerged at that moment, so struggled to get to the surface. One of the guys saw me trying to reach my hand out of the water in order to signal that I was in trouble. Thankfully, he pulled me up, and I was spared from drowning. I never told my parents about the incident, but neither did I ever venture into the Ohio River again. Fishing from the shore is a lot safer.

So as I mentioned a moment ago, I have no doubt that the Lord has been merciful to me over the years, protected me from my own foolish mistakes, and saved me from some accidents which could have cost me my life on at least three occasions. This is in addition to the various afflictions that I've suffered all my life. It should be evident to you by now that I am a

rather fragile and weak vessel of clay. However, at the same time, I am also convinced that I am what the Lord apparently preordained me to be; for as we read in the Book of Psalms:

"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

So you see, despite my physical imperfections, I am what God made me to be; and you are exactly the way that God ordained for you to be as well; because God does not make mistakes in His designs. If you still doubt that this is so, then please consider how the Lord replied to Moses when Moses said that he was not eloquent of speech, and therefore wasn't qualified to be the Lord's Prophet to the children of Israel in Egypt:

"And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."
Exodus 4:10-12, KJV

A number of years later, we also find the Lord stating the following through Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy:

"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

It becomes evident then from the verses in Psalm 139, Exodus chapter four, and Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two, that the Lord simply does not make mistakes in the manner in which He chooses to design each one of us. As you will learn later on in this article, in His Divine Wisdom and Foresight, God has a plan and a purpose for everything that He does, whether we understand it or not. Having said that, please do not think that I share the previous points regarding my personal health as a means to elicit pity from my readers, as that is most certainly not my intention. I share them for two reasons. The first reason is to help my readers to realize that I share in your physical sufferings and afflictions. I am reminded of the following verses that are found in the New Testament:

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
1 Peter 5:9, KJV

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation

also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

So you see, none of us are alone in our various trials of faith and bodily afflictions. My second reason for sharing a history of my personal health with you, is to show you that God is able to use anyone. Furthermore, as I explain in such articles as "The Only Credentials You Need!", quite often it is the people who are most likely not to succeed in the eyes of the world. God seems to delight in using the most foolish, weak and pitiful of His creations that He can find, in order that He might receive all of the glory, and not man. Allow me to share with you some of my favorite verses that are found in the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians:

"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."
1 Corinthians 1:25-29, KJV

I believe that God never gives us more than we are able to bear. As Paul wrote in the verses I shared earlier from his Epistle to the Church at Corinth, the Lord gives us exactly what we need, when we need it, in order to keep us humble and totally dependent upon Him. He is a jealous God, and He wants all of the praise, and all of the glory. As Paul says above, perhaps if we did not have these different bodily afflictions, we would be so lifted up in our pride, that the Lord would not even be able to use us for anything. In our pride and vanity, we would attempt to take the credit to ourselves every time something good happens as a result of something we did or said. Even with our afflictions, we are still tempted to do this very thing, and sometimes we do.

As I point out in such articles as "So You Really Think You Are So Humble?", as well as in "Love, Mercy Forgiveness and Chastisement", our pride is one of our biggest enemies. We must keep on guard against it at every moment; because the more fruitful our ministry is, the more Satan will try to use our pride against us, so that we will become ineffective for the Lord. If that were to happen, the Lord would be forced to remove the anointing of His Holy Spirit from us. If you think that this is not possible, then please consider the following verse where King David speaks of this very thing:

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me."
Psalms 51:11, KJV

If King David was so worried about such a thing happening to him because of his sins, should not we be concerned as well? So again, we must not forget our sinful nature. We must not forget what manner of men and women we are. We must realize that the only thing that enables us to accomplish anything for the Lord, is the treasure which we have in our earthen

vessels; that is, in our bodies. As I explain in the article entitled "A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit", that treasure is of course the Divine Anointing of God's Holy Spirit. Even Jesus humbly acknowledged "I can of mine own self do nothing." Please consider the profound truth that is revealed in the following verses:

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."
James 1:23-24, KJV

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."
John 5:30, 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

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

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

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WHY DOESN'T GOD HEAL ME? : PART 2

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No Righteousness Of Our Own, God's Abundant Grace And Mercy, It Is God's Choice To Deliver, Apostle Paul's Encounter With Jesus On Road To Damascus, Paul's Healing And His Affliction, God Doesn't Half Heal People, God Keeps His Word, The Nature Of Paul's Thorn In The Flesh, God's Grace Is Sufficient, God Keeps Us Humble Through Our Afflictions, My Personal Journey To Heal My Vision, Humbled By My Pride, Presumptuous Faith, Questions We Ask When Our Prayers Go Unanswered, Prayer And Fasting, Frivolous Prayer Requests, Don't Question The Lord, Embrace God's Ways By Faith, God's Unknowable Thoughts, Count Our Blessings And Be Thankful, Just Be Honest With Ourselves, Faith Through The Word, Pray For Each Other's Healing, Faith Is A Two-Way Operation, Our Lack Of Faith Can Limit God, His Strength Is Made Perfect In Weakness, Paradox Of The Apostle Paul's Gift Of Healing, Jesus Could Have Saved Himself In The Garden Of Gethsemane, Ordained To A Ministry Of Afflictions

Returning to my Christian friend, in the message which he sent to me, he asked me if I felt that it was alright for him to use man's wisdom and technology as a means to correct his visual problem. In his message, he used the phrase "the bad eye that God gave me". Let me pose a question to my readers. If you really believe that the Lord has given you a certain affliction in the flesh, is it appropriate to take the time to ask Him why He may have given you the affliction? Please do not misinterpret my words. I am not trying to make anyone feel condemned. When it comes to sin and imperfection, we're all in the same boat, as is made perfectly clear by verses such as the following:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."
Isaiah 64:6, KJV

"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"
Psalms 130:3, KJV

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:"
Malachi 3:2, KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one . . . But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"
Romans 3:10, 21-23, KJV

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"
Titus 3:5, KJV

Furthermore, as the Apostle Paul likewise wrote in His Epistle to the brethren at Rome:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:1, KJV

So again, it is only by the Grace and Mercy of God that any of us stand. Furthermore, it is only by that same Grace and Mercy, which is bestowed upon us when we accept the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that any of us will be permitted

to enter God's glorious Kingdom, and walk the golden streets of the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem. Personally, I have no doubt that if such a wonderful Gift is bestowed upon me, my very first reaction will be to cry profusely like a baby, because I will feel so unworthy of such an honor. How about you?

At any rate, the point I wish to make is the following: If a person is truly convinced that God has given him a particular affliction, should he not also accept that the Lord possesses the means to remove the affliction from him if He so desires?

As I explain quite extensively in the series entitled "Death: Final Battle, Final Victory", what we each do in regards to our bodily afflictions is really a matter of personal faith. However, our faith must be aligned with God's Will. As we saw in part one, concerning his "thorn in the flesh", the Apostle Paul wrote "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." Some Christians speculate that Paul may possibly have been referring to poor eyesight, which may have resulted from his amazing and frightening encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Personally, I am not certain that this theory is correct.

One of the reasons why I embrace this position is because in Acts chapter nine we are informed that the Lord sent Ananias to heal Paul's eyes. We are very specifically told that Paul was blind for three days, and that afterwards he received his sight. Consider the following verses which clarify these points:

"And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink . . . And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."
Acts 9:8-9, 17-18, KJV

For me personally, to entertain the possibility that Paul still had problems with his eyesight afterwards, suggests that the Lord did not really heal Paul of his blindness. At the very least, it suggests that the Lord did not heal Paul completely. Quite frankly, I am not aware of any incidents in the Bible where the Lord partially healed a person. What kind of glory would the Lord receive from "half-healings"? The mere idea of "half-healings" seems totally contrary to God's Word, which plainly teaches us the following:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"
Numbers 23:19, KJV

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

It is plain to see then that God is a man of His word, and He always keeps His word, whatever it happens to be. The New Testament informs us that Jesus sent Ananias to heal Paul's eyesight, and that is precisely what Ananias did. Allow me to also point out that Paul's temporary blindness resulted from his direct encounter with the Lord; yet in discussing his affliction, whatever it was, he states that "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me". If Paul's temporary blindness was a result of his encounter with the Lord -- which the Lord later healed through Ananias -- then for Paul to say that his affliction was due to a messenger of Satan, seems totally unrelated to the events which occurred in Acts chapter nine.

Obviously then, Paul's affliction must have been something else. In addition to what Paul states in the previous verse, we are given another indication that it had something to do with some physical weakness, by the following statement that Paul also makes in his second Epistle to the Corinthians:

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."
2 Corinthians 10:10, KJV

While we can debate all day regarding the exact nature of the Apostle Paul's affliction -- or thorn in the flesh -- the key point that I wish to make doesn't really concern what kind of affliction Paul had, but rather how the Lord chose to respond when Paul asked Him three times to remove the affliction from him. What did the Lord tell Paul? He said the following:

". . . My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."
2 Corinthians 12:9a, KJV

In other words, based upon Paul's own words in the previous verses when he twice states "lest I should be exalted above measure", it seems to me that he readily recognized that the Lord was basically saying to him, "No Paul. I'm sorry; but you need this affliction. You've been a self-righteous Pharisee all of your life, and this is the only way that I can keep you humble, in order that you might remain useful to Me. This way you are forced to rely on My strength, and not on your own". As the Lord also instructed the Prophet Zechariah to tell Zerubbabel in the Old Testament:

". . . Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."
Zechariah 4:6b, KJV

In his message to me, my friend's basic concern was whether or not it is alright to use prescription lenses, because, as he stated, they are made by man, whereas our sight is given to us by the Lord. To answer his question, allow me to share another interesting -- and perhaps amusing -- testimony from my own life.

Over four decades ago, when I first dedicated my life to the Lord, I became associated with a religious fellowship which had a center in the northeastern part of the United States of America. This particular organization embraced Divine Healing

as one of the tenets of its faith. On a side note, allow me to mention that to this day, I honestly do not recall having ever witnessed a bona fide on-the-spot miracle of healing. I will discuss this subject more at length in a moment.

At any rate, I was a very proud, young lad of eighteen years of age. I had never smoked cigarettes. I never swore. I never drank any kind of alcohol. I also never engaged in sex. As a result, I was very self-righteous, and no doubt viewed myself as being in good standing with the Lord. Lord forgive me for foolishly entertaining such proud thoughts!

One particular day, we had a Bible study regarding the topic of faith and healing. By the time the class was over, I was very inspired, and I had convinced myself that I was full of faith. Thus, without informing my older brothers in the Lord, I promptly went upstairs, I claimed a few verses from God's Word, and I boldly told the Lord that I had the faith to have my vision completely restored. To demonstrate my utter faith in His Word, and because I knew that faith must be backed by actual works, I took off my glasses, and I broke them right in half in front of the Lord.

In other words, I totally burned my bridges, and there was absolutely no turning back. After all, we did not have Crazy Glue back then; and because of the manner in which my glasses had broken, tape would not suffice. Well, needless-to-say, I was not able to see properly for the next month either until a new pair of glasses had been purchased for me! What a very humbling experience that was! It seems that my faith was not what I had assumed it to be. This is what is referred to as presumptuous faith. We presume to have faith for something, when perhaps we really don't. For whatever our reasons, we deceive ourselves and we fool ourselves. We become blinded by our own pride.

In my case, even after I had experienced this embarrassing incident, I still was unable to recognize this truth. Thus, I continued to wonder why my eyes had not been restored to 20/20 vision. What had I missed? What was I doing wrong? Why hadn't the Lord honored my faith? Was I still displeasing Him in some way? Had I been found unworthy of healing? I do not doubt that there are many other Christians similar to myself who have probably asked themselves the very same kind of questions when their particular prayer petition has not been granted to them by the Lord.

Well, time passed, and about three years later I was doing the Lord's Work down in Florida. Once again -- the second time now, mind you -- the desire grew within me to have my eyes healed by the Lord. That time, I think I was a little wiser; because instead of just breaking my glasses as I had done on the previous occasion, I simply chose to not wear them for a while as I waited for the miracle of healing to occur. I think that I may have even fasted for a few days -- drinking only water -- in accordance with verses such as the following:

"In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

Daniel 10:2-3, KJV

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred."
Matthew 4:1-2, KJV

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
Matthew 6:16-18, KJV

"Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."
Matthew 9:14-15, KJV

"Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."
Matthew 17:21, KJV

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered."
Luke 4:1-2, KJV

"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."
Mark 9:29, KJV

"And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."
Acts 9:8-9, KJV

"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."
Acts 14:23, KJV

For a more in-depth look at the practice of fasting, please consider reading the article entitled "The Biblical Practice of Fasting". To continue my narrative, despite my sincerity, and my willingness to follow the Rule Book, as had happened on the previous occasion, no miracle of healing occurred, and my vision was not improved in the least. Again I wondered why God did not seem to hear my supplications. What was I doing wrong? Was I so unworthy? Were my personal sins so grievous? Was I so despicable in His sight? Had the age of miracles passed?

Well, some four years later, I found myself in Mexico; and again the desire grew within me to have my eyes healed by

the Lord. That time I really went all out to demonstrate my faith before the Lord. I fasted and prayed for a full week non-stop, while I kept up my regular witnessing activities. All I did was drink water during that period, and nothing else -- not even bread -- as I recall. By the end of that week, not only was I extremely weak, but I was about ready to see my own kind of "heavenly visions" as well.

Similar to the Apostle Paul, that incident was my third and most desperate plea before the Lord to heal my eyes. As you can imagine, He did not do it. That last attempt to restore my eyes to 20/20 vision occurred twenty-five years ago, and I have not made any further attempts since that time. It is obvious to me now that it is apparently not God's Will for this to occur in my life. Aside from all of the questions that I posed a moment ago, the one other possibility which has occurred to me -- and perhaps to you too -- is that the Lord simply does not view my less-than-perfect vision as a major physical problem that requires healing.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this series, there are a lot of people in the world who suffer from health issues that are much worse than my own; so maybe God views my desire to have my eyes restored to 20/20 vision as a frivolous request. Perhaps that is why, despite my endeavors to be healed, the Lord has chosen to ignore my prayers and fasts. While I have offered a number of different possibilities which may or may not explain the situation regarding my eyes, as I mentioned earlier, perhaps the real answer lies in what the Lord told the Apostle Paul when he too desired healing:

". . . My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."
2 Corinthians 12:9a, KJV

Perhaps another lesson that God is trying to teach some of us regarding our afflictions, is that we should not question His ways. Instead, we should embrace them by faith, knowing that He will never allow anything to happen in our lives, unless He knows that it is for our own good. As the Patriarch Job, the Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul all inform us, God's ways and thoughts are simply too profound for our limited minds to grasp. To even attempt such a thing, as some modern men of science try to do, is pure folly. As the Apostle Paul also wrote, considering that we are mere vessels of clay, who are we to question our Maker concerning why He has made us thus? Consider the following verses:

"Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number."
Job 9:10, KJV

"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

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"
Romans 11:33, KJV

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Romans 9:20, KJV

In addition to my previous thoughts, it is also possible that through our many trials and afflictions of our weak, mortal flesh, the Lord is simply trying to teach us to be thankful for what we do have. As I mentioned in part one regarding the old Arab proverb, God may be endeavoring to teach us to not complain, and to count our blessings instead. It seems to me that as with the Apostle Paul, we all need to learn to say the following:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11, KJV

Allow me to share another thought. Perhaps it is time that we are all honest with God, with ourselves, and with each other, regarding our faith. Regardless of how humbling it might be for us, sometimes we need to simply admit that we do not have the faith that we should have. In my particular case, while God has blessed me with the Gift to write many Scripture-filled articles which feed and inspire my family in the Lord, in the area of faith and personal healing, it is apparent that I am rather weak. I am no spiritual giant.

Perhaps this revelation may come as a surprise to some of you who have known me for a while. After all, I have known the Lord for many years; during which time I have studied, memorized and quoted His Word extensively. Based upon what the Apostle Paul wrote regarding faith in the following verse, one would think that I should be absolutely full of enough faith to move mountains by now, yet I can't, and I don't:

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

Romans 10:17, KJV

For a more in-depth look at this topic, you may wish to read such articles as "The Faith of a Little Child" and "Faith and the Shroud of Turin: No Sign Shall Be Given".

Despite my many years of studying God's Word, and even though a number of my dear Christian friends have earnestly prayed for my health, I am none the better for it; at least not in any way that I can discern. Of course, perhaps I would be in a lot worse condition if they were not praying for me! I am certain that the problem is not on their end. Surely God will honor their fervent prayers. After all, they are not asking for something selfishly. Rather, they are obeying God's Word by petitioning for another brother's needs. As the Apostle James writes 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."

James 5:14-15, KJV

So why aren't my friends' prayers being answered in regards to my health? One thing we need to realize is that prayer, faith and healing is a two-way operation. No matter how much faith may be possessed by the persons making the petition, the person being prayed for must also possess the faith to receive the blessing. For example, we know that Jesus was not given the Spirit by measure. He was given the Power by His Father to perform many great miracles. Yet notice that we find verses like the following in the New Testament:

"Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."
Matthew 9:29, KJV

"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."
Matthew 13:58, KJV

It seems that it is possible then for us to actually limit God -- and the miracles which He chooses to perform -- by our own lack of faith. At least that is how I personally understand the previous two verses. I am also reminded of the following verse that is found in the Gospel of Luke:

". . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"
Luke 18:8b, KJV

As far as my personal health is concerned, I do not believe that my lack of healing is a result of doubting God's Word. I believe His Word, and I know that He can heal me if He so chooses. However, I have come to accept that the Lord simply does not wish to heal me of my light afflictions. In other words, perhaps my friends' prayers have not been answered, simply because they are not in accordance with God's perfect Will for my life. As I said earlier, similar to the Apostle Paul, perhaps my very weaknesses serve to glorify God more in my life. To reiterate, the Lord said "my strength is made perfect in weakness."

While this may at first strike some of you as being rather odd, consider the following. We have already seen that Paul suffered some kind of affliction in the flesh. Yet at the same time, we find verses like the following in the Book of Acts:

"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

"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. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:"
Acts 28:3-9, KJV

What an absolute paradox! Here we have a man -- Paul -- who remained totally unaffected by the poisonous bite of a viper, and who had such a powerful anointing upon his person, that just touching his clothing resulted in people being healed. Yet at the same time, Paul still possessed an affliction in his flesh of which he could not be rid, even though he had asked the Lord to do so on three different occasions. I am likewise reminded of the following verse where Jesus' bitter enemies accused Him of not being able to save Himself as He hung on the Cross:

"Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save."
Mark 15:31, KJV

Obviously, Jesus could very well have saved Himself the agony of the Cross if He had so desired it. After all, as the Lord informed Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane after Peter had drawn his sword, He could have asked His Father for twelve legions of Angels, as we see by the following verses:

"And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"
Matthew 26:51-54, KJV

Is it possible that some of us are called to a similar type of ministry? In other words, while we are able to help save, feed, encourage and even heal others through the particular work which the Lord has given each of us to do, insofar as our personal well-being is concerned, like Paul, perhaps the Lord prefers to keep us in a state of personal weakness, and suffering from a variety of afflictions, in order to ensure that we will remain humble, and totally dependent upon Him.

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

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WHY DOESN'T GOD HEAL ME? : PART 3

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Solely Dependent Upon The Lord, That No Flesh Should Glory In His Presence, Unprofitable Servants Motivated By God's Will, Modern Worldly Preachers And Their Ilk, A Treasure In Earthen Vessels: God's Spirit, Apostle Paul's Battles With His Pride, Let Him Glory In The Lord, Paul's Thorn In The Flesh, Kept On Track And Humble Through Our Afflictions, Obedient Unto Death, Don't Try To Bargain With God, Sign God's Blank Contract And Demonstrate Faith, Our Light Affliction, Resurrection Bodies, Closing Remarks, Additional Suggested Reading Resources List

Why would God purposely allow us to remain in such a weak condition, suffering from all manner of bodily afflictions, even though we have dedicated our lives to His service? Why does the Lord not heal us? As we have already clearly seen, the Apostle Paul answers these intriguing questions for us when he writes the following:

"That no flesh should glory in his presence."
1 Corinthians 1:29, KJV

Not only does God want to ensure that we will remain humble and totally dependent upon Him, but if anything good should result from our lifelong labor of love, He wants everyone to know that it is because of Him, and not because of us. After all, as Jesus Himself tells us, we are unprofitable servants who have simply done that which is our duty to do. Likewise, Paul informs us that we cannot take any credit, because it is God's Will alone that is working through us. Consider these verses:

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."
Luke 17:10, KJV

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."
Philippians 2:13, KJV

Think about this for a moment. Imagine if all of the Lord's children had great looks and enjoyed perfect health. Do you honestly believe that we would be as effective for the Lord?

Before you are tempted to respond in the affirmative, take a minute to consider all of the worldly preachers who are good looking, who do seem to enjoy good health, who have lots of money, who build their million-dollar megachurches, who have their TV shows and their radio broadcasts, who fly around in their private jets, who receive the praises of men, etc. Now

tell me, do you really want to be like them? Do you honestly believe that they all have the anointing of God's Spirit? If you believe that they do, then Jesus owes the Scribes and the Pharisees an apology. Let me refer you again to articles such as "The Only Credentials You Need" and "So You Really Think You Are So Humble?".

Maybe we are weak, and maybe we are pitiful, and maybe many of us suffer from all kinds of bodily afflictions which we sometimes wish that we did not have, and maybe none of us would ever win a Mr. Atlas contest or a Miss America pageant; but let's never forget that Father knows best. He knows what we need, and when we need it. Furthermore, as I pointed out in part one of this series, we already have exactly what we need, and that is our treasure in earthen vessels. We have the precious Gift of God's Holy Spirit. Allow me to share that verse with you one more time:

"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

Please remember that line: "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." It has never been, and it is not now, of us. As Paul writes, it is God's Will and Spirit that are working through us. Period.

Considering how much the Apostle Paul wrote about the topic of pride and giving God the glory in all things, I can only wonder if perhaps the real affliction to which he may have been referring was his own pride, and not simply a physical sickness or limitation of some kind. Paul offers a possible hint that this may be so in the following verse where he twice writes "lest I should be exalted above measure", as we see here:

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."
2 Corinthians 12:7, KJV

As a former Pharisee, Paul undoubtedly had to fight against his pride every single day of his life. He had to constantly make certain that he was really giving God the glory in all things. Consider some of the other things that he wrote which carry the same tone and intent:

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 1:31, KJV

"Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;"
1 Corinthians 3:21, KJV

"And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why

dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"
1 Corinthians 4:6-7, KJV

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"
1 Corinthians 9:16, 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

It is evident that Paul recognized that pride was one of his biggest weaknesses in the flesh; and that pride always wants to give glory to self, instead of to God, to whom it is due. Considering how much the Lord used Paul, this must have been a constant thorn in the flesh for him. Satan must have always been after Paul to take just a little bit of the credit; but as Paul himself writes:

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."
2 Corinthians 2:11, KJV

Another possibility that occurred to me is that the "thorn in the flesh" and the "messenger of Satan" which buffeted Paul may have been a demon whose job was to condemn Paul, and to remind him of his former sinful life as Saul of Tarsus; the Pharisee who had persecuted the Lord's Church. The Greek word which is translated as "thorn" in the King James Version of the Bible is "skolops". It refers to a sharp piece of wood, or a sharp stake or a splinter. So perhaps this "messenger of

Satan" was constantly jabbing or pricking Paul's conscience, and reminding him of his former persecution of the Church. If you recall the incident on the road to Damascus, Jesus said to Paul at that time "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The Lord was using the very same kind of symbolism -- although it was an ox goad in that case -- because at that time, Paul was resisting the conviction of God's Spirit. No doubt being reminded of his former evil deeds served to keep Paul humble.

I believe that this is why Paul gloried in his infirmities. He accepted his personal afflictions as the Lord's way of keeping him on track. He knew that he needed them. I tend to believe that my afflictions are also by God's design. Perhaps they are His way of reminding me of how weak and little I am, lest in my pride I soon forget it. It is His way of helping me to keep my pride under control, lest I too should become lifted up, and want to take some of the credit for everything that He has accomplished through this ministry. So I can see the Lord's Wisdom in my physical sufferings, and I agree with Him when He says:

". . . My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."
2 Corinthians 12:9a, KJV

One thing is for certain. Regardless of whether or not God chooses to heal me of my fleshly annoyances, by His Grace, I hope to continue to remain obedient to His Will, and to serve Him faithfully until that great day in which He chooses to call me Home. My faith isn't a bargain faith. In other words, I won't say "Lord, I will serve you faithfully, if you are willing to do such-and-such for me." It is foolish to try to bargain with God. He is the one who sets the terms. Our duty is to sign His blank contract, and to obey by faith, knowing that He will carry out His plans for our lives. Real faith obeys no matter what the consequences, and regardless of the conditions. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen . . . 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 11:1, 6, KJV

What about you? Are you able to see God's invisible hand in your physical afflictions? Do you view them as a blessing or as a curse? Are you willing to obey the Lord even if He never heals you in this current life? The choice is up to you. Just remember that little is much if God is in it. If you do what you can for the Lord, in spite of your physical limitations, He will bless you for it. In fact, as we see from the verses above, He will reward us if we seek Him with all diligence, and maintain our faith in Him until the very end, in spite of our fleshly afflictions. As the Apostle Paul also writes:

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"
2 Corinthians 4:17, KJV

What does the Apostle Paul mean when he writes "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"? Part of the answer can be found in the wonderful verses which follow. While the Lord may not choose to heal us in this current life, we have the assurance that once this life has passed, we will all be majestically transformed when we pass from death unto life; that is, unto Eternal Life, as we see here:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"
Romans 6:4-5, 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

"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

"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 3:21, 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

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 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 15:40-52, 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

With these verses I will bring this series to its conclusion.
I hope that you have found it informative, and I pray that it
has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. If you
are interested in additional study concerning Divine Healing,
please consider reading such articles as the five-part series
entitled "Death: Final Battle, Final Victory".

If you have enjoyed reading this series, please consider
sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an
account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also very
much appreciate if you would take the time to click on the
corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so
much, and may God bless you abundantly! For additional info,
you may want to refer to the list of resources below which
were also mentioned in this article, or which are related to
the topics which were discussed in this article. All of them
are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

Are Personal Tragedies Due to Sin?
Demonic Possession and Sickness: A Biblical Perspective
Death: Final Battle, Final Victory!
Backsliding, Divine Chastisement and the Divine Agreement
Love, Mercy, Forgiveness and Chastisement
Do You Want Love and Light, or Rod and Wrath?
Beholding the Evil and the Good
So You Really Think You Are So Humble?
The Only Credentials You Need!
Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?
The Biblical Practice of Fasting
The Faith of a Little Child
Faith and the Shroud of Turin: No Sign Shall Be Given

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