

The Christian's Biggest Challenge
And Other Hard Truths Concerning Suffering

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My thanks to my wife, Sue, my son, Christopher, and my friends, Patrick Audinet, Sr., and Jim Rhodes, for their input. If there be any good in this work, all the credit, of course, goes to our Father above. If there be any faults, all the blame goes to me.

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*For my wife, Sue,
who has been by my side all these years*

Introduction

*"May the day perish on which I was born,
And the night in which it was said,
'A male child is conceived.'
May that day be darkness;
May God above not seek it,
Nor the light shine upon it...
I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest, for trouble comes."*

--Job 3:3-4, 26

*Cursed be the day in which I was born!
Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore
me!...
Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and
sorrow,
That my days should be consumed with shame?*

--Jer. 20:14, 18

I have had many days in which I felt like Job and Jeremiah felt. I have asked God repeatedly, if he had to make this world and if it had to include suffering, couldn't he have done it without me? Why did he have to include me? I did not ask to be born. I did not ask to be made. I did not volunteer to suffer. Why can't he start over and this time do it without me?

I have had migraine headaches since I was twenty and I have had financial struggles all of my married life, working sometimes seven days a week to provide for my family, making stupid decisions along the way, and trying to protect my family from those decisions. My Christian brothers kept hurting me again and again. I kept getting my hopes up, thinking that at least one of them will finally love me like they are supposed to do, only to have my heart ripped open again. My calling is to teach the Bible, but when I try to teach the truth in the Church, I am told by my leaders to stop teaching and even to leave the fellowship.

I realize that my struggles are pale compared to the struggles that others face, yet they were important to me. I used to live in a place in which cliffs were no more than twenty minutes away. There were times when the temptation to drive off a cliff would haunt me for days on end. The only thing that stopped me was the knowledge that doing so would devastate my wife.

I know that is not the Christian answer. The Christian answer would be that ending my life would not please my Lord Jesus Christ. But it is the honest answer. I figured the Lord and I would have a long talk about it up in heaven, but that would not help my wife down here on earth.

Since I could not run away from life, I would often want to run away from God. I would long for a place in which God had no control, in which God did not exist, so that I could escape his plan for my life, including the suffering in it. Of course, such a place does not exist. So, once again, I would have to get on with life and learn to handle the suffering.

Conversely, at times, instead of trying to run away from God, I would run to him, not to seek his help, but to confront him. I knew that he knew that at times I was angry with him and at times I even hated him, so I was not afraid to tell him so. But in the end, I would surrender to him. He is God. He knows more than I do. He is wiser than I am. He sees more than I do. And he is always doing what is best for everyone. And so, Father, not my will, but your will be done.

But what is his will? Just what is he doing? And why does he have to include me in all of this? Why couldn't he have done all of this without me? Why do I have to suffer? For that matter, why do any of us have to suffer?

These essays were born out of the attempt to answer those questions. They have the answers I have received after years of struggling with God in prayer and struggling with the Scriptures in study. I do not claim that these essays have all of the answers. I doubt that anyone will have all of the answers until we are in heaven, and maybe then the answers won't matter.

These essays were not written all at once but arose independently over a period of years. That is why some of the material is repeated in two or more essays. Some of the essays are based on teachings I had given on Sunday mornings or in Bible studies. "The Word on Healing" is a

response to a challenge presented by a minister in the Word of Faith movement.

If these essays appear at times to be cold and academic (the essay on Job began as a term paper for a master's level class thirty-four years ago), it is because they deliberately do not appeal to your emotions. They are not designed to make you feel good. They appeal to the truths found in the Scriptures, truths that remain true no matter what your circumstances are, no matter what you are suffering, and no matter what you are feeling. These truths are hard truths. We don't like them. I don't like them. But once we accept them, they give us something solid to which we can cling, even in our darkest moments. They tell us that there is a reason why we are here and why we are suffering, even if we do not understand that reason right now. They give us the hope that in the end everything will be made right. They give us a reason to keep going. They give us the faith to endure.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

--2 Cor. 4:16-18

The Christian's Biggest Challenge

Perhaps no passage of Scripture summarizes the purpose and goal of the Christian life better than Phil. 3:7-17:

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended;

but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

Paul says that his one goal in life, the one thing that drove everything else he did, was to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. And he says that this goal should also be the goal of every Christian. Why is that? Because if we pursue that goal, if we pursue knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, we will fulfill everything else the Scriptures tell us to do.

Know Christ

First of all, we are to know Christ. To know someone, in the biblical sense, means to have more than just information about that person. It means “to have an intimate relationship with” that someone. It means to be so intimately related with someone that you become one with that person. It is, in fact, a word used of married couples. The people in this relationship discover each other’s hopes and dreams and faults and failures—and love each other anyway. In this

relationship, hearts are bared, commitment is tested, obstacles are overcome, and joy—real joy—is found. This kind of relationship can be gained and maintained only through love. Thus, to know someone, in the biblical sense, is to love that someone. To know Christ is to become intimately acquainted with Christ, to have a marriage relationship with Christ, to become one with Christ, to love Christ.

Knowing Christ will enable us to fulfill everything else the Scriptures tell us to do because knowing Christ, and therefore knowing God, enables us to obey God's commandments. "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4).

Jesus said that loving God, which is the same as knowing God, will also enable us to obey God's commandments. "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'" (Matt. 22:35-40).

One of God's commandments is to love one another. "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23).

In fact, if we do not love one another, we do not know God. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and

everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

If we know God, we will love one another. And if we love God and our neighbor and each other, everything else will fall into place because we will keep his commandments.

Know the power of His resurrection

Second of all, we are to know the power of Christ's resurrection. Knowing the power of his resurrection will enable us to fulfill everything else the Scriptures tell us to do because knowing the power of his resurrection will enable us to live a new life free from sin. As Paul tells us in Rom. 6:4-6, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Through faith in Christ, we became one with Christ, which means that our old man was crucified with him; but now, because of the power of his resurrection, we walk in newness of life.

Because our old man has been crucified with Christ and we now walk in newness of life, we can reckon ourselves as dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:11). And because our old man has been crucified with Christ and we now walk in newness of life, we can live for others and treat others differently. "But now you yourselves are to put off

all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:8-10).

Know the fellowship of His sufferings

Third of all, we are to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Knowing the fellowship of his sufferings will enable us to fulfill everything else the Scriptures tell us to do because knowing the fellowship of his sufferings will enable us to stop sinning. "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Pet. 4:1-2).

Suffering in the flesh enables us to do the will of God. What is difficult for so many of us to accept is that the will of God includes suffering in the flesh. "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil 1:29).

Why does the will of God include suffering? The person who has suffered has "ceased from sin." But ceasing from sin means that we are now keeping God's commandments. Keeping God's commandments can only be done by loving God and loving our neighbor and loving the brethren.

But here is the kicker: we love God and love our neighbor and love our brethren by suffering for them and laying down our lives for them. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "By

this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Jesus was our example. He suffered horribly because of our sins, yet he loved us anyway. He also suffered because it was the will of God for him to do so, but he loved God anyway. This means that we are going to be called upon to suffer for other people even though they have sinned against us and love them anyway. And at some point in our lives (and maybe at *several* points in our lives) we will suffer because it will be the will of God for us to do so and we will have to love God anyway.

This, then, is the Christian's biggest challenge: it is to know and love God and Jesus Christ and our neighbor and the brethren NO MATTER WHAT. No matter how much you have to suffer, no matter how sick you get, no matter how persecuted you are, no matter how much tribulation you endure.

This is why we need to know the power of his resurrection. To love, the old man must die daily and the new man must be resurrected daily.

And this is why we need to know the fellowship of his sufferings. To love, we must suffer for our brothers and for others just like Jesus suffered for us.

If you are having your quiet time every day, if you are studying your Bible consistently, if you are praying and going to church and witnessing on a regular basis, that is commendable. But are you really pursuing the purpose and goal of the Christian life? Are you pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus? Are you

pressing on to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of you? Are you counting all things as loss so that you can know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings? Are you ready to take on the Christian's biggest challenge?

If so, it is time to ask yourself some hard questions. Look at the people around you. Does God love them no matter what they do? Can you do the same? Can you love them no matter what they do? Even if they hurt you?

Now look at yourself. Does God love you no matter what you do? Can you do the same for him? Can you love him no matter what he does? Even if what he does causes you to suffer?

Four Ways in Which We Limit God

The story of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11 is well known. Lazarus becomes sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, send a message to Jesus: "Behold, the one whom you love is sick." Their desire, of course, is that Jesus would come immediately to heal their brother. Instead, Jesus waits two more days and by the time he arrives at their home, Lazarus has been dead four days and has already been buried. Jesus has the stone covering the tomb rolled away and then he orders Lazarus to come forth. Lazarus walks out of the tomb, alive again. Many of the people who see this come to believe in Jesus.

When Jesus arrives at the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and then Mary say to him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." This sounds like a statement of faith, that they truly believed that Jesus could have healed Lazarus of his sickness. But this statement shows just how far their faith really went. They had faith that Jesus could solve the problem as long as Lazarus was alive. Now that Lazarus was dead, there was nothing that Jesus could do.

So the statement is now a complaint. The sisters are actually complaining that Jesus had not acted within the limitations that they, consciously or subconsciously, had imposed upon him. Within their statement, we can find four limitations. These are the same four limitations which we often impose upon God, consciously or subconsciously, when we ask him to deliver us from our problems.

Period of Time

“Lord, if You had been here....” First, like the sisters, we often limit God by expecting him to act within a certain period of time. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to Jews who had become Christians and were being persecuted by other Jews for doing so. They had kept the faith for some time but apparently did not understand why God had not delivered them from the persecution yet and were seriously considering returning to Judaism. So the writer of the Epistle says to them, “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:11-12). He reminds the Hebrews that we inherit the promises of God not only through faith but through patience as well. God has made many promises to us believers, but he rarely says when he will fulfill those promises. Sometimes inheriting those promises can take a long time. How long?

The writer of the Epistle picks Abraham as someone the Hebrews should imitate. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and

multiplying I will multiply you.' And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb. 6:13-15). The promise to which he refers is found in Genesis 22: "Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies'" (Gen. 22:15-17). When did Abraham obtain that promise? After his death. Abraham did not get to see that promise fulfilled while living here on this earth. But he did get to see it fulfilled from heaven.

The writer of the Epistle had to remind his readers that this life is not the only life that we believers have. In chapter 11 he lists the men and women who lived by faith, believing that God would fulfill the promises he had given them, and then says this about them: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (Heb. 11:13-16). They knew that death would not stop God from fulfilling his promises and his purposes. They knew that if God did not fulfill his promises

while they were alive here on earth, he would fulfill them after their death and certainly would fulfill them in the New Jerusalem. That is why they did not limit God to acting within a certain period of time.

Jesus deliberately waited until Lazarus had been dead for four days. The Jews at that time believed that the spirit of the deceased stayed with the body for three days but departed at the end of the third day. Hence, there was hope that the dead could be resurrected within the three days because the spirit was still nearby, but from the fourth day on, it was too late. Jesus resurrected Lazarus on the fourth day to show that he can resurrect anyone whenever he desired to do so. He told Martha, “*I am* the resurrection and the life,” not “*I will be* the resurrection and the life,” meaning that he can resurrect anyone at any time, even now.

The sisters' statement shows that they knew Jesus could conquer sickness; they needed to know that he could also conquer death. They needed to know that even death cannot stop God from fulfilling his purposes.

God will deliver us from our problems and our suffering—eventually. But he will do so on his timetable, not ours. It may seem that we are having to endure for a very long time, but our suffering cannot last any longer than our lifetime here on this earth. The good news is that after this life there awaits us an eternal life free of problems and suffering.

The other good news is that if God has made you a promise, such as the salvation of your children, and you have not seen that promise fulfilled yet, you can rest assured that he will fulfill it. You may not see it fulfilled here on earth, but you can trust that he will fulfill it.

Person

"Lord, if You had been here, my brother...." Second, like the sisters, we often limit God by expecting him to act on behalf of a certain person. Joseph, the son of Jacob, endured hardship—slavery, imprisonment, separation from his beloved father and brother—but he came to realize that it all happened to benefit others. "Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive'" (Gen. 50:18-20). Many people, including his own family, survived the famine because of the suffering he endured.

Just before Jesus departed for Bethany, he told the disciples that Lazarus had died. "And I am glad for your sakes," he said, "that I was not there, that you may believe" (John 11:15). Jesus let Lazarus die for the sake of his disciples because they, like the sisters, also needed to know that he could conquer death as well as sickness. Of course, Lazarus and his sisters did not know that the disciples needed to learn this and were never told that they needed to learn this. But Jesus knew this.

Sometimes we endure suffering not for our own sake but for the sake of others, even for people whom we may not even know are affected by our suffering.

Procedure

"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Third, like the sisters, we often limit God by

expecting him to follow a certain procedure. Naaman was a respected general in the Syrian army. He was also a leper. The Hebrew servant girl he had captured in battle told him that Elisha, the prophet in Israel, could heal him. So Naaman went to visit Elisha, but as he approached Elisha's house, Elisha did something that Naaman had not expected. "And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.' But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, 'Indeed, I said to myself, "He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy"' (2 Kings 5:10-11). Naaman had expected Elisha to heal him according to a certain procedure and because of that expectation he almost missed out on his healing. Eventually, he did what Elisha told him to do and he was healed.

When the sisters sent their message to Jesus, they expected him to come right away and heal their brother. Or perhaps they expected him to just say a word and their brother would be healed immediately. They certainly did not expect that Jesus would first let their brother die and then heal him. But that is precisely what Jesus did.

In fact, John makes the point of saying that Jesus did so because of his love for Lazarus and his sisters. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was" (John 11:5-6). Because of his love for Lazarus and his sisters, Jesus did not heal Lazarus immediately but deliberately waited two more days. And because he waited, Lazarus died.

Jesus will deliver us from our problems. We may not understand the procedure he uses to do so, but that does not matter. He does not want us to put our trust in a procedure. He wants us to put our trust in him. And he wants us to trust that he is acting because of his love for us.

Purpose

"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Fourth, like the sisters, we often limit God by expecting him to accomplish a certain purpose. When Nathan the prophet confronted David concerning his sin with Bathsheba, he said that David's punishment would include the death of the child born to David and Bathsheba. David immediately began fasting after the child became sick in an effort to accomplish one purpose and one purpose only: to get God to change his mind and let the child live. The child died anyway. God's purpose in letting the child die was to chastise David. And David accepted it.

When the sisters sent the message to Jesus, they expected Jesus to accomplish only one purpose: heal Lazarus. But Jesus had a much bigger purpose in mind. His purpose was to glorify his Father and himself (John 11:4, 40). Why? So that others would come to believe in him and so be saved. Because Lazarus died, Martha and Mary's house became full of mourners who witnessed the resurrection and came to believe. Lazarus gained temporary, physical life, but the witnesses gained eternal, spiritual life.

So often our purpose in crying out to God is to get him to end our problems and our suffering. But God has a much bigger purpose in mind. His purpose is to glorify himself and to

save as many people as possible. We may not understand how our problems or our suffering is helping him to accomplish his purpose, but we must trust that if he does not deliver us immediately, he must have a purpose for doing so.

The faith of the sisters went only so far and because of that, they imposed limitations on Jesus. But Jesus graciously and lovingly did not act according to their limitations. Instead, he accomplished his purpose and along the way he taught them something new, saved a lot of people, and glorified his Father.

Too often, we do what the sisters did. We impose limitations on God because of our limited faith. Then we end up complaining about our problems or our suffering because God is not acting according to our limitations. But God is going to accomplish his purpose anyway. So we can choose to keep imposing our limitations or we can choose to drop our limitations and trust that he loves us, that he wants to teach us something new, that he wants to save a lot of people, and that he wants to be glorified for it all. In short, we can choose to keep on limiting God and to keep on complaining, or we can choose to put an unlimited faith in the unlimited love of our unlimited God.

The Proper Response

“Man’s chief end,” declares the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” “The Lord your God, in your midst, the Mighty One, will save,” declares the prophet Zephaniah to God’s people. “He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph. 3:17). Imagine that: the almighty Creator of the universe so happy with his people that he breaks out into singing and dancing. Now imagine this: God’s people so happy with their Creator that they, too, break out into singing and dancing. This is the kind of relationship God has always wanted to have with his people: a friendship filled with joy and gladness and dancing and singing. God created man so that God could find his pleasure in his people and that his people could find their pleasure in him. And he has invited each and every one of us into this friendship. Have you accepted his invitation? Are you enjoying your relationship with God?

Sometimes we let our problems keep us from enjoying our relationship with God. Sometimes those of us who have

not accepted his invitation use our problems as an excuse to avoid entering into the very relationship that will eventually solve those problems. And sometimes those of us who have accepted his invitation use our problems as an excuse to throw the relationship away. Job did. When severe problems came into his life, he wanted to end his relationship with God. But Job ultimately discovered that by responding properly to his problems, they actually deepened his relationship with God.

Blaming God

Job's story is well known. The author of the book of Job describes him as "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1), an opinion that even God himself shares. As the story opens, he has a large family, has more wealth than anyone else in the East, and apparently has good health. But for reasons unbeknownst to him, his abundant life is suddenly taken from him. His herds are stolen or destroyed, his servants are slaughtered, his children are killed, and his skin develops terrible sores. From being "the greatest of all the people of the East," he is quickly reduced to being a stricken man sitting on an ash heap, scraping away at his rotting flesh.

Three of his friends come to comfort him, but the four men end up in a dialogue about why this great misfortune has occurred. And this is where the conflict in the story really begins. For the one question that haunts all intelligent ethical thinkers has taken on flesh and confronted them in the form of the suffering Job, and that question is: Why do the righteous suffer? Relying on their own wisdom, the three friends end up resorting to the teachings that they have been taught.

Believing that any and all afflictions must be retributive, they view the question as absurd. The righteous never suffer: only sinners do. If a so-called righteous person is suffering, it is because he has sinned somehow. The friends are so assured that this teaching is true that at one point Eliphaz can totally ignore his first-hand knowledge of the consistently benevolent character of his friend Job and begins to list all the crimes he knows Job must have committed:

Is not your wickedness great,
And your iniquity without end?
For you have taken pledges from your brother for no
reason,
And stripped the naked of their clothing.
You have not given the weary water to drink,
And you have withheld bread from the hungry.
But the mighty man possessed the land,
And the honorable man dwelt in it.
You have sent widows away empty,
And the strength of the fatherless was crushed.
Therefore snares are all around you,
And sudden fear troubles you (Job 22:5-10).

These are rather serious charges. And the only evidence Eliphaz needs to obtain a conviction is Job's intense suffering.

Job, however, is the only one with enough courage to question this teaching. Convinced that his wisdom is at least equal to—if not superior to—theirs, Job asserts that this teaching cannot possibly be correct, at least not in all cases, for Job knows, and even God knows, that he has not done

anything wrong. He agrees that this affliction is from God, but it cannot be because of his sin, for he has none. His suffering, therefore, must be caused not by something that is in his own character but by something that is in the character of God. This leads Job to question God's character and even accuse God of unrighteousness.

If I called and He answered me,
I would not believe that He was listening to my voice.
For He crushes me with a tempest,
And multiplies my wounds without cause (Job 9:16-17).

He laughs at the plight of the innocent (Job 9:23).

Does it seem good to You that You should oppress,
That You should despise the work of Your hands,
And smile on the counsel of the wicked? (Job 10:3).

Know then that God has wronged me,
And has surrounded me with His net (Job 19:6).

As God lives, who has taken away my justice,
And the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter... (Job 27:2).

Job goes on to reason that if God can afflict a perfectly righteous man, then maybe there is no absolute standard by which God metes out punishment; *i.e.*, maybe God does not operate according to justice but according to whim. If so, then

it does not matter whether one is righteous or wicked, for God will punish him anyway:

It is all one; therefore I say,
"He destroys the guiltless and the wicked" (Job 9:22).

In a famous passage, Job cries out for a mediator between him and God. Many Christians believe that Job is looking forward to the work of Jesus Christ, who is the mediator between God and man. But in context, this is not what Job is asking for at all. He is so convinced of God's unrighteousness and injustice that he has no hope of ever convincing God that he is innocent and therefore does not deserve this affliction.

I am afraid of my sufferings;
I know that You will not hold me innocent.
If I am condemned,
Why then do I labor in vain?
If I wash myself with snow water,
And cleanse my hands with soap,
Yet You will plunge me into the pit,
And my own clothes will abhor me.
For He is not a man, as I am,
That I may answer Him,
And that we should go to court together.
Nor is there any mediator between us,
Who may lay his hand on us both.
Let Him take His rod away from me,
And do not let the dread of Him terrify me.

Then I would speak and not fear Him,
But it is not so with me (Job 9:28-35).

Job is looking for a judge or a mediator who will be convinced of his innocence and who will then *force* God to stop the affliction. Job is looking for someone who is more righteous and more just and more powerful than God. But such a person does not exist, so Job resigns himself to the possibility that his righteousness is never going to sway the whims of the almighty but unrighteous and unjust God.

This, then, is the dilemma: either God is just and therefore Job must have sinned, or Job has not sinned and therefore God is unjust. The arguments for both sides seem to go on and on, until finally, unable to convince each other, the dialogue drops into silence. Through the use of their own wisdom, the men reach an impasse: they are left dangling, frustrated by the lack of an answer that satisfies all of them.

Yet, it is significant that, of the four, the author allows Job to get in the last word, and in that last word, Job stubbornly clings to his position:

Far be it from me
That I should say you are right;
Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.
My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go;
My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live (Job
27:5-6).

Job is so sure of his innocence that he places himself under a series of curses, knowing full well that none of them will come

to pass. It is also significant that in the Prologue, where the author's opinion of Job is clearly stated, Job is presented as totally sinless. The author, therefore, rejects the friends' position before they even begin to speak. Job is righteous. This affliction cannot possibly be the result of sin.

Moreover, even though the author pictures Satan as bringing the afflictions into Job's life, he makes it abundantly clear that Satan is only an instrument of God. He clearly places the responsibility for the afflictions on God's shoulders. When Satan appears in the throne room in heaven, it is God, not Satan, who brings up the subject of Job. God tells Satan what he can and cannot do to Job, meaning that if God had simply said, "No," to Satan's challenges, Satan could not have done anything to Job. God does more than just give his permission to Satan to afflict Job: he *authorizes* him to afflict Job. Because we are an independent minded culture, we do not fully understand how authority works. Solomon never touched a tool or a stone during the building of the First Temple, yet he takes the credit for building it (1 Kings 8:20, 27) because he *authorized* its building. Even though thousands of other people did the actual work, the Scriptures say that he built the temple (1 Kings 6:1-38) because they were acting under his authority, on his behalf. Satan afflicts Job, but he is acting under God's authority, on God's behalf, which means that God is ultimately responsible for the afflictions. And the author point blank says so. Near the end of the book, he says that Job's relatives "comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him" (Job 42:11). And God himself takes responsibility for afflicting Job. When Satan appears the second time, the Lord says to him, "And still he (Job) holds

fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3). And yet, does this author really want us to take Job's position? Is God really unjust? Is God really unrighteous?

Blaspheming the Name of God

Far too often, we *do* take Job's position. We think our lives should be like Job's was before the afflictions came upon him. We think we should have enough wealth to satisfy our every desire and make ourselves comfortable. We think our lives should be free of problems and pain. After all, didn't Jesus say he came to bring life, and that more abundantly? When, therefore, we think this abundant life has been taken from us, when we can no longer satisfy our every desire, when our lives become full of problems and pain, we think that something has gone wrong—not with us—but with God. We come to believe that God is good when life is good but God is bad when life is bad or that God does not love us or that God is evil after all, so why should we bother loving or serving or worshipping him? He's not giving us what we want, so why should we give him what he wants? We no longer enjoy our relationship with God; rather, we come to disesteem, denigrate and even despise him. In short, we blaspheme the name of God simply because our goal is to secure for ourselves an abundant life and we see God as standing in the way of our goal.

Blaspheming the name of God is more than just using his name as a swear word. The Hebrew language has several words that can be translated as "blaspheme," "profane," "curse," or "despise" and they mean, "to scorn, despise,

reject," "to despise, contemn, disesteem," "to curse, execrate, be light" (that is, "to treat as insignificant"), "to hack, cut off, reproach, revile," "to pierce, to hollow out," and "to perforate, pierce through, profane." In both Hebrew and Greek, the word "name" takes on all the meanings and connotations that it has in English. It can mean the label given to objects and people ("The name of Abram's wife was Sarai." [Gen. 11:29]), a person's reputation ("A good name is to be more desired than great riches." [Prov. 22:1]), or a person's authority ("And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus." [Esth. 8:10]). But it also takes on one additional connotation: it represents the person's character ("Holy and awesome is his name." [Ps. 111:9]). In fact, the person's name *is* the person himself. To worship the name of God is to worship God. To blaspheme the name of God is to blaspheme God. Taking the meanings of these words together, to blaspheme the name of God means to scorn the character of God, to despise the person of God, to reject the authority of God, to treat him as if he were ranked beneath us instead of above us, as if his authority were meaningless and could be ignored, as if he were insignificant and of no more value than the dirt beneath our feet. Some of the Hebrew words, the ones that mean "to hack," "to pierce," "to perforate," suggest that blasphemy is an act of violence done to God's person. They are vivid reminders that those who blaspheme the name of God are in fact assassinating the character of God.

These meanings also suggest that we can blaspheme God in several different ways. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God told the Israelites that they had gone into captivity in Babylon because they had blasphemed God in three of those

ways, the same three ways we practice on an almost daily basis.

First, we blaspheme God by refusing to know him. To know God, in the biblical sense, does not mean knowing information about God. The Hebrew word means, “to have an intimate relationship with.” It means to be so intimately related with someone that you become one with that person. It is, in fact, a word used of married couples. The people in this relationship discover each other’s hopes and dreams and faults and failures—and love each other anyway. In this relationship, hearts are bared, commitment is tested, obstacles are overcome, and joy—real joy—is found. To know God, then, is to have a deep, marriage-like relationship with God in which you become intimately acquainted with his character.

This is the kind of relationship that God had wanted to have with his people, the Israelites. “And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them.’ Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might *know* that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezek. 20:11-12). But this is also the kind of relationship that the Israelites had refused to have with their God. “In this too your fathers blasphemed Me, by being unfaithful to Me” (Ezek. 20:27). The Israelites preferred to have relationships with other gods, who were more important to them than God himself. Because they treated God as if he were unimportant, because they could so easily turn their backs on him and ignore him, they blasphemed God.

Second, we blaspheme God by refusing to obey him. This is not the disobedience done in ignorance, nor is it the disobedience of one who is trying to obey but fails. This is the disobedience done by the person who knows what God has commanded us but deliberately chooses to disobey anyway. "Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall live by them'; they greatly defiled My Sabbaths" (Ezek. 20:13). Because the Israelites thought that God's authority over them was meaningless and could be ignored, they continuously rebelled against him and so blasphemed his name.

Third, we blaspheme God by refusing to become like him. The Israelites despised God's judgments and did not walk in his statutes because "their heart went after their idols" (Ezek. 20:16). As always, what one does on the outside is motivated by whom one is on the inside. The Israelites habitually refused to know God because there was something wrong with their character and they habitually refused to obey God because there was something wrong with their heart. That is why when God made the covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, he told them, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). He knew that they needed to become like him. They needed to have his character, to have his heart. But the Israelites refused to change. They preferred their faithless character over his faithful character and they preferred their rebellious heart over his righteous heart. Because they decided that God's character was one not worth emulating, they habitually blasphemed the name of God.

Eternal Death

The problem with blaspheming God's name is that it brings upon us some rather severe consequences. Because of their continual blasphemy, the Israelites were conquered by a foreign power and taken to Babylon. There they were enslaved for seventy years, which is a lifetime for most people. They were unable to free themselves until a king rose up and declared them free.

Worse than that, blasphemy can lead to death. Leviticus 24 tells us of an Israelite who "blasphemed the Name and cursed." The man was placed in custody and the Lord was consulted about what should be done to him. The Lord declared that he should be stoned to death. What is intriguing is the Lord's reason for stoning him:

"Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death. Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal. If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him. And whoever kills an animal shall restore it; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death" (Lev. 24:17-21).

The Lord's reason for stoning the man centers on the famous *lex talionis*: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The Lord's point is that criminals should compensate for their crimes accordingly; this is why the man should be stoned. But the man's crime was blasphemy, not murder. Surely blasphemy is not the same as murder! To the Lord, it is.

The Hebrew word used here for “blaspheme” means “to pierce” and “to hollow out.” To blaspheme the Lord is to pierce him with a knife, to hollow him out, to reduce him to an empty shell. Such an attack on a person with a physical body would kill the person; hence, blasphemy is treated the same as murder. Such an attack against the Lord is obviously futile since he does not have a physical body and at any rate he is immortal, but it is still an act of violence against his person. It is an act that cannot be tolerated. The person who attempts to reduce the Lord must himself be reduced until there is nothing left but an empty corpse.

Those of us who have blasphemed God may think that we have gotten away with it because we do not seem to be enslaved by anyone and we are certainly still alive. But the Bible says first the natural, then the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46). What happened to the Israelites in the natural was only a symbol of what has happened to us in the spiritual. Jesus says that we have indeed been conquered and enslaved by a foreign power. That power is called sin. When we chose to blaspheme God or to rebel against him in some way, we gave in to the power of sin and became enslaved by it. The proof that we are enslaved is that we continue to blaspheme God and rebel against him. “Whoever commits sin,” Jesus said, “is a slave of sin” (John 8:34). Once enslaved, we cannot free ourselves. Only our King, Jesus Christ, can set us free. Until then, we will continue to blaspheme God and rebel against him because we will continue to do whatever sin wants us to do.

Our sins have also left us spiritually dead. Our sins, the Bible tells us, have separated us from God (Is. 59:2). This separation leaves us spiritually dead because God is the

Source of Life. He does not hand out life as if it were a gift that exists apart from him. Not at all. As Moses told the Israelites, "He *is* your life" (Deut. 30:20). Moreover, he has placed this life within his Son, Jesus Christ.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11-12).

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

This is why Jesus could declare to his disciples, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Therefore, to be separated from Jesus is to be separated from life. That is why the Bible speaks of us as being "dead in trespasses and sin" (Eph. 2:1). Our spirits are already dead because we are spiritually separated from God. Eventually, the sin within us will cause our bodies to die as well. We will then appear before the throne of God where he will pronounce his final judgment upon us. If at that point we are still separated from him, he will throw us away into the lake of fire. There we will be eternally separated from God. Perhaps the worst part about the torment will be the realization that we could have avoided all of this: we could have taken the way out offered by Jesus. Instead, we chose to

remain separated from God and from life because we chose to continue to blaspheme the name of God. The irony is that we chose to blaspheme God's name in the first place because our goal was to achieve a physically abundant life. Our search to attain the abundant life will ultimately lead us to eternal death.

Not only does our blasphemy lead us to spiritual captivity and death but it also helps to lead others to spiritual captivity and death. God told the Israelites that when they went into captivity because of their blasphemy, the nations who took them captive blasphemed the name of God as well (Ezek. 36:16-22). The people of that time saw a battle between themselves and their enemies as a battle between their god and the gods of their enemies. If they prevailed, then their god was obviously stronger than the gods of their enemies. Therefore, when the Israelites were conquered and taken captive, the people around them saw the God of Israel as weak and incompetent, unable to keep his people from defeat and slavery. They had no respect for the God of Israel and ended up blaspheming his name. But God held Israel responsible for the blasphemy of these people. If the Israelites had not blasphemed God, they would not have gone into captivity and so gave occasion for these people to blaspheme God.

God will also hold us responsible for the effects our blasphemy is having on the people around us. By blaspheming his name, we are telling others that God is incompetent, that he is worthless, that he is lower than dirt. If they believe us, then they too will view God the same way and will join us in blaspheming his name. In this manner, we will be causing the enslavement and the deaths of those around us. Yes, they will

be judged for choosing to blaspheme his name, but we will be judged for giving them reasons to do so.

The Proper Response

Job was in danger of causing his own death. Because of his blasphemy, he deserved to die. More than that, because he was blaspheming God in the hearing of his friends, he was in danger of leading them to their deaths as well. He was so focused on getting back his abundant life that he was unaware he was leading them all to certain death. He was in danger of doing this simply because he did not know God as he should have. If he had known God as he should have, he would have known that God is so righteous and so just and so loving and so merciful that he did not want Job and his friends to die. He wanted them to live. That is why God chose to use this occasion to show Job and his friends something new about his character. That is why he sent them the man called Elihu.

Elihu has proven to be something of an enigma to some biblical scholars. A few are offended by the brashness and the seemingly inflated ego with which he presents himself. They see him as the cocky kid who thinks he has all the answers. Yet Elihu claims to have the answers not because of anything he has done but because the Spirit of God has given them to him (Job 32:8, 18; 33:4). Others believe that Elihu's speeches were not part of the original book of Job. After all, he abruptly appears out of nowhere and just as abruptly disappears. No one responds to him or even mentions him. Furthermore, they argue, his speeches contribute nothing to the book. However, as we shall see, Elihu's thought agrees with God's, and God even employs Elihu's vocabulary. Still

other scholars believe Elihu's speeches should be deleted so that God can respond immediately to Job's cry in 31:35:

Oh, that I had one to hear me!
Here is my mark.
Oh, that the Almighty would answer me,
That my Prosecutor has written a book!

But Job had also cried to God in his earlier speeches, and God had not responded immediately to those cries either. Besides, as J.W. McKay points out, their argument is the argument of those who dwell in ivory towers, not of those who dwell in everyday life. Placing God's speeches so close to Job's cry

makes for vivid reading, but it corresponds very little with normal experience (which is presumably the author's main concern) that God should respond to a sufferer's agonized "Why?" with such forceful, even brutal abruptness. The alternative, that the hand of God should operate more gently and gradually requires that we treat Elihu more seriously as a key personality in the drama, for his words are all that stands between Job's plea and God's self-revelation. That is, we must view him as a transition figure preparing the way for God's entry (J.W. McKay, "Elihu—A Proto-Charismatic?" *Expository Times*, XC, No. 6 [March 1979], p. 167).

Indeed, Elihu implies that the three friends should have been the ones who prepared the way for God's entry and accuses them of failing to do so. "Not one of you," he says,

“convinced Job, / Or answered his words” (Job 32:12). The Hebrew word translated as “convinced” is the same Hebrew word Job had used to mean “mediator.” The three friends should have been the mediators who reconciled the differences between God and Job. But they had failed to do so, so Elihu has come to take their place. He is not, however, the mediator Job has expected, for Elihu has not come to prove Job’s innocence and force God to stop this affliction. Rather, he has come to prove God’s innocence and help Job to stop his blasphemy. He has come to vindicate God’s justice (“He does not preserve the life of the wicked, / But gives justice to the oppressed” [Job 36:6]) and defend God’s righteousness (“I will fetch my knowledge from afar, / I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker” [Job 36:3]). He has come to show Job where *his* thinking has gone astray.

Job and his friends have discussed retributive affliction, that is, affliction that comes as a punishment for one’s sins. Elihu discusses this as well, but he also introduces the concept of educative affliction, that is, affliction that serves an educational purpose. Elihu sees the two forms of affliction as having something in common, and it is their common element that takes Elihu’s thought beyond the thought of the friends and of Job himself.

According to Elihu, the purpose of retributive affliction is to provoke a response from men, and that response should be, “Teach me what I do not see” (Job 34:32) and

Where is God my Maker,
Who gives songs in the night,
Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth,

And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven? (Job 35:10-11).

This response, though, must be sincere: God will not listen to the empty plea of arrogantly wicked men (Job 35:12-13). If, however, the cry is sincere, God will respond by teaching them what they need to do.

And this is exactly what the purpose of educative affliction is. Elihu states that when men are sleeping,

Then He (God) opens the ears of men,
And seals their instruction (Job 33:16).

He makes a similar statement later in his speeches: "He also opens their ear to instruction." And what is the instruction God gives to men? He "commands that they turn from iniquity" (Job 36:10). Why?

Behold, God works all these things,
Twice, in fact, three times with a man,
To bring back his soul from the Pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of life (Job 33:29-30).

The goal of God's teaching is not condemnation but redemption. He wants to bring forth life, not death. If men listen to and obey God's teaching, they will live; if not, they will perish. But if God had wanted men to perish, he would not have been teaching them in the first place. This is why Elihu stands back in wonder and exclaims,

Behold, God is exalted by His power;
Who teaches like Him? (Job 36:22).

The wonder is that anyone would charge such a redemptive God with injustice and unrighteousness.

God's Response

How does this apply to Job? To risk an oversimplification, it can be said that up to this point Job and his friends have been occupied with the *cause* of affliction, whereas Elihu is more occupied with the *results* of affliction; Job and his friends have been more interested in discerning what Job has done to *deserve* this affliction, whereas Elihu is trying to divert Job's attention to how he should *respond* to this affliction.

Indeed, this has been the issue all along. Unlike Job and his three friends, Elihu believes that the righteous can experience affliction even though they are righteous. According to Elihu, the difference between the righteous and the wicked is not whether they endure affliction or not, the kind of affliction they endure, the duration of the affliction, or even the intensity of the affliction. The difference is how they *respond* to affliction. The wicked respond by accusing God of unrighteousness and injustice. They respond by blaspheming the character of God and cursing him to his face. This is precisely the kind of response Satan said God would get if God allowed affliction to enter Job's life. Unlike Job, Satan did not question God's righteousness, and unlike the three friends, Satan did not question Job's righteousness. His contention was that Job's righteousness was merely a response to the

abundant life God had given him: take away that abundant life and Job would respond by cursing God to his face. This is the same contention that Satan throws at God concerning each and every one of us. Job's response proved to Satan that he was right, and far too often, our responses prove to Satan that he is right about us.

What is more, our responses only further the purpose of Satan. He knows that if we respond by blaspheming God, we will die. He wants us to die, but he wants us to die not because he hates us or because we are a threat to him. We are not important to him at all. But we are important to God, and Satan knows that if he can get us, who are dearly loved by God himself, to curse God to his face and then walk away from him, we will deeply hurt the heart of God. Of the Israelites who had turned away from him, God said, "I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me" (Ezek. 6:9). The Hebrew word translated here as *crushed* literally means "to burst, to break." God's heart burst, was broken, was crushed when the Israelites, whom he loved deeply, turned away and blasphemed him. This is Satan's purpose. He wants to hurt the heart of God. When we blaspheme the name of God—and worse yet, when we cause others to blaspheme the name of God—we are doing what that Israelite had done: we are placing our hands over the hand of Satan and helping him to drive a knife into the heart of God and then helping him to twist it in an effort to hollow out that heart. We are trying to take the life of the very One who wants to give us a life filled with joy and gladness and dancing and singing.

What Satan has failed to realize is that God's heart is bigger than any hurt we can afflict upon it. What he has not counted on is that our response to our problems is not the end of the story, for God has responded to our response. He renewed his invitation to enter a friendship with him when he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die the death that we who have blasphemed God deserve to die so that God can restore us to that relationship filled with joy and gladness and dancing and singing. Even though we have responded to our problems by walking away from him, he has responded by giving us the opportunity to come back home. And even though we have hurt him deeply, the heart of God still loves us very much.

We are important to God. He does not want us to die. He wants us to live. We obtain life by becoming one with him, who is life. But God knows that no one will come to him if they believe he is insignificant or incompetent or evil. That is why he is working to accomplish something much more important, of far more consequence, than merely giving us life. His primary purpose is to vindicate his name. As he said through the prophet Isaiah,

For My name's sake I will defer My anger,
And for My praise I will restrain it from you,
So that I do not cut you off.
Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it;
For how should My name be profaned?
And I will not give My glory to another (Is. 48:9-11).

We deserve his anger, for what we have done to him is despicable. Nevertheless, he will let us live—not so we can proclaim to the world that we are alive because of our righteousness, for we have attempted to murder God himself, but so that we can proclaim to the world that we are alive because of *his* righteousness, *his* justice, *his* lovingkindness, and *his* mercy. He will let us live so that we can prove to the world that he is not the kind of God that Satan and we and others have blasphemously said he was. When those around us see how merciful and kind God has been to us, then they, too, will see that he is righteous and just after all, and they will come to him so that they can receive life as well.

But he will not grant us life and then let us go on living the way we have been. Our willingness to help Satan drive a knife into the heart of God proves that there is something desperately wrong with our own hearts—something that needs to be fixed now. For until it is fixed, we will continue to blaspheme the name of God, and hence will continue to keep ourselves and others from the life God has offered us. This is why he puts us through the furnace of affliction. He wants to refine us, to purify us. His purpose is not to make us comfortable. His purpose is not to satisfy our every desire. His purpose is not even to make sure we physically survive our affliction. His purpose is to vindicate his name before the watching world, and he will do whatever he must do to accomplish this purpose. He may take away our health, our wealth, and even the lives of our children if he has to, for they are not really ours; they are his. He does this not because he is a sadist who likes to see people suffer, but because *this is the only way he can give us life*. He must remove from our

hearts the desire to blaspheme his name—that desire that separates us from him and ultimately kills us—and replace it with the desire to vindicate his name—that desire that allows us to become one with him and ultimately gives us life. If we choose to walk with him through the furnace, we will come out of the other side able to see God as he really is and able to tell other people just how righteous and just and loving and merciful God really is and therefore able to bring those people to him where they will find life itself. Along the way, we will discover to our great delight that God has given us the life he has promised, a life filled with joy and gladness and dancing and singing. If we choose not to walk with him through the furnace, we will continue to suffer eternal death because we will continue to curse God to his face and will continue to walk away from him. And God will let us walk away. As important as we are to God and as much as he wants to give us life, he will not change his purpose nor alter the way he is going about accomplishing his purpose simply because we do not like affliction. He will use affliction to vindicate his name, and he will use affliction to create a people who will also vindicate his name and who will live forever with him. Whether or not we will be among those people is now up to us.

If we want to be among those people, then we must respond to affliction the way the righteous do. The righteous choose to believe God will eventually use their affliction to bring forth life in them and through them. The righteous choose to believe God will use their affliction to teach them how to live the life he has promised them, so they humbly await his instruction. The righteous choose to believe God is working for the benefit of themselves and those around them

because the righteous choose to believe that God is always righteous and just and loving and merciful. Because they believe all of this, they can enjoy their relationship with God even in the midst of their affliction. And they choose to believe all of this even when their physical abundance has been taken from them. In other words, the righteous respond to affliction the way Habakkuk the prophet responded to his affliction:

Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation (Hab. 3:17-18).

Eliciting the Proper Response

This is precisely the kind of response Elihu has been trying to elicit from Job. So far Job's response has not been favorable. He has decided that there is no benefit in enjoying his relationship with God, that he would much rather walk away from God than endure affliction, and Elihu calls him on it:

What man is like Job,
Who drinks scorn like water,
Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity,
And walks with wicked men?
For he has said, "It profits a man nothing

That he should delight in God....
Take heed, do not turn to iniquity,
For you have chosen this rather than affliction (Job
34:7-9, 36:21).

Job has also been seeking an audience with God so that he can argue with him (Job 13:3, 15, 18) and show God why he is wrong for afflicting him (Job 10:3, 19:6). Elihu now calls upon Job to respond more appropriately: "Instead of constantly crying out to God, why don't you stop and listen to what he has to say? Instead of arrogantly arguing your case before him, why don't you humbly submit to his teaching?" In short, Elihu is preparing Job to hear from God.

With this same goal in mind, Elihu subtly shifts Job's attention to a gathering storm. As early as 35:5, Elihu directs Job's gaze towards the clouds, and while Job is considering them, Elihu goes on to say, "If you sin, what do you accomplish against *Him*?... If you are righteous, what do you give *Him*?" (Job 35:6-7). Elihu already knows that the gathering storm is nothing less than the coming presence of God himself. And only Elihu knows that God desires to speak in this storm: "God thunders marvelously with His voice" (Job 37:5). This is another way in which God speaks to men. Just as God's teaching through affliction leads to redemption, so too God's message in this storm will not be a message of condemnation, for the storm does

whatever he commands it....
Whether for correction, or for His world

Or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen (Job 37:12-13).

This is not the storm Job spoke about in chapter 27, the storm that chases away the wicked. This is the storm that will answer Job's despair.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Elihu urges Job to *respond* by commanding him to "Hear attentively the thunder of His voice" (Job 37:2) and again,

Listen to this, O Job;
Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God
(Job 37:14).

Ironically, he calls upon Job to

Teach us what we should say to Him,
For we can prepare nothing because of the darkness.
Should He be told that I wish to speak?
If a man were to speak, surely he would be swallowed
up (Job 37:19-20).

The point of the irony is clear: God has finally arrived, just as Job has asked. But he is here to speak. This is not the time to argue with him: this is the time to simply listen. And so, now that God is about to take center stage, and now that Job has been prepared to listen to him, Elihu quietly disappears.

Elihu disappears, but his vocabulary does not. Elihu had earlier rebuked Job by saying,

Therefore Job opens his mouth in vain;
He multiplies words without knowledge (Job 35:16).

Now the Lord's first word to Job is the question,

Who is this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge? (Job 38:2).

Then, before the Lord goes on to ask a series of rhetorical questions, a series already begun by Elihu, he gives Job an ironic command that hearkens back to Elihu's ironic statement:

Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you will teach Me (Job 38:3).

The Lord, then, is picking up where Elihu had left off.

Indeed, the Lord continues to undermine Job's position, just as Elihu has done. It is not that the Lord is displeased with Job's claims to innocence, for the Lord had earlier declared in the Prologue that Job was "a blameless and upright man" (Job 1:8, 2:3) and nowhere in his two speeches does he flatly contradict that statement. Thus, the Lord, like the author, rejects the friends' position before they even begin to speak. Later, to confirm to the friends that he has rejected their position, he will tell Eliphaz in the Epilogue that his "wrath is aroused" (Job 42:7) against the friends and he will require them to bring a sacrifice to Job as their form of repentance.

Right now, however, the Lord is more concerned with Job's position, and what does displease him about Job's position is that Job has sought to defend his own righteousness by questioning God's righteousness. Job is no longer called the Lord's servant: the Lord now views him as a "faultfinder" and as one "who rebukes God" (Job 40:2). The Hebrew word translated as "who rebukes" is the same Hebrew word Job had used to mean "mediator." The Lord is implying that Job could no longer wait for the mediator and judge who would force God to stop the affliction, so Job has appointed *himself* to be that mediator and judge. The Lord says that Job even went so far as to pass judgment on God himself:

Would you indeed annul My judgment?
Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?
(Job 40:8).

This is the ultimate irony: the created is passing judgment on the Creator. The one who should have been God's friend has become God's judge.

It is here that we encounter a seeming contradiction, for in the Prologue, at 2:10, the author had stated, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." And in the Epilogue, at 42:7, the Lord himself will declare to Eliphaz, "...you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." Yet here, at 40:2, the Lord is clearly displeased with what Job has been saying about him.

How does one explain this contradiction? First of all, the author's statement in 2:10 must be confined to what Job has said in the Prologue. There indeed, Job did not sin with his

lips. But nowhere does the author insist that Job continued to refrain from sinning with his lips. It must also be remembered that 2:10 is parallel to 1:22, where the author clarifies what he means by the phrase, "did not sin with his lips:" "In all this, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." Yet, charging God with wrong is exactly what Job does in the ensuing dialogue. That is why when Elihu finally specifies which sin Job is guilty of, the sin has to do with the words he has spoken since the affliction came upon him, and not with some deed he has done to bring this affliction upon himself.

Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost,
Because his answers are like those of wicked men!
For he adds rebellion to his sin;
He claps his hands among us,
And multiplies his words against God (Job 34:36-37).

This is also why in 40:2 the Lord calls him a faultfinder.

Yet, somewhere between 40:2 and 42:7, Job's words become right again. Those words, of course, can only be Job's confessions of repentance in 40:3-5 and 42:1-6, where Job finally admits that his previous words had been "out-of-line:"

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

This is why it is better to translate the Lord's statement to Eliphaz in 42:7 as "...you have not spoken *to Me* what is right, as my servant Job has." The translation "of Me" makes it sound like the Lord is deciding who among the four friends

won the debate, hence the apparent contradiction between 40:2 and 42:7, whereas the translation "to Me" must refer back to Job's repentance when Job spoke directly to the Lord himself.

In his speeches, then, the Lord, like Elihu, is not interested in stating why Job has been afflicted. Indeed, he does not mention Job's suffering at all, as if the suffering itself were unimportant, or at least unimportant compared to what the Lord *is* interested in, and that is Job's *response* to his suffering. Through his two speeches, the Lord elicits the response he has been seeking. He does this by showing Job in his first speech that he is much wiser than Job: if, as Job and his friends believe, wisdom is measured by one's age (a concept already challenged by Elihu), then the Lord must be the wiser of the two for he has lived longer than Job has; and if, as Job and his friends also believe, wisdom is measured by the amount of knowledge one has, then again the Lord must be the wiser for he knows more than Job does. It is this speech that elicits Job's first response:

Behold I am vile;
What shall I answer You?
I lay my hand over my mouth.
Once I have spoken, but I will not answer;
Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further (Job 40:4-5).

He now knows that he has nothing to teach the Lord and that the Lord has much to teach him. He is now ready to be taught.

In his second speech, the Lord shows Job that he is more powerful than Job. Job cannot humble the proud, nor capture such powerful creatures as Behemoth and Leviathan. However, the Lord can, for he created them all and they are his. It is this speech that elicits Job's second response:

I know that You can do everything,
And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You
(Job 42:2).

Yet, if this is all the Lord has to teach him, then Job could still go on to respond with a complaint. He has already admitted that God possessed wisdom and power, but that early admission had only meant to Job that nobody could stop God from acting unjustly (Job 12:13-25). However, because the Lord has also taken him on a "whirlwind tour" of the world and of the universe, Job has learned that the reasons that the Lord exercises wisdom and power are the same reasons he commands the storm:

Whether for correction, or for His world,
Or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen (Job
37:13).

Elihu had implied that God had come to teach, and that when God teaches, he "teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, / and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens" (Job 35:11) and that he teaches a man what he does not see (Job 34:32). Does the Lord's teaching make Job wiser?

You asked, "Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?"

Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know (Job 42:3).

The first mark of true wisdom is the acknowledgment that one does not yet know everything and that one still has much to learn. And does the Lord teach Job what he has not seen?

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.
Therefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:4-5).

God the Teacher has shown Job himself—and Himself.

In essence, what God has done is use Job's affliction to cause him to know God more intimately than he had ever known God before. Because of this deeper, more intimate knowledge, God was able to vindicate his name in the eyes of Job. God's self-revelation convinced Job that God is righteous and just and loving and merciful after all. Because he could now see this, Job chose to stop blaspheming the name of God. This choice spared him from certain death. This deeper, more intimate knowledge of God also allowed God to change the impact Job was having on his friends. God told Eliphaz that he was displeased with him and his two friends because they had not "spoken to Me what is right, as My servant Job has" (Job 42:7). He ordered the friends to bring sacrifices to Job who would pray for them. Job then took the time and effort needed

to offer the sacrifices and pray on their behalf. "And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). God gave the abundant life to Job only after he chose to shift his focus from himself to the needs of his friends. This choice spared his friends from certain death. Job's new-found knowledge of God brought forth life and that more abundantly for himself and for those around him.

Abundant Life

This is why God desires that all come to know him, for knowing him brings forth life. God told the Israelites that he would restore them to their land, not because they deserved it, but because he wanted the people around them to know him:

"And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:23).

To bring this about, God could no longer allow the Israelites to blaspheme his name. Instead, he caused himself to be hallowed in the Israelites before the eyes of the people around them.

He desires to do the same through us. He wants to change us from a people who continually blaspheme his name to a people who will vindicate his name before the eyes of

those around us. He wants to do this because the people around us need to know him. And they need to know him so they can have life and that more abundantly.

Indeed, knowing God is the only way to obtain abundant life. Sin separates us from him who is the Source of Life, but knowing God unites us with him who is the Source of Life. This union is a union of hearts and spirits: our hearts become one with his heart and our spirits become one with his spirit. Thus, the abundant life is first and foremost a spiritually abundant life, not the physically abundant life we think we should have. As Jesus said, "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Job's physical abundance was merely a symbol of what God is offering us spiritually. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). The life he offers us is abundant because its blessings include righteousness, peace, joy, love, wisdom, and salvation, all of which are found in Christ because he *is* our righteousness, he *is* our peace, he *is* our joy, he *is* our love, he *is* our wisdom, and he *is* our salvation. In short, he *is* our abundant life. Therefore, when we physically die because of the effects of sin on our bodies and we stand before God so he can pronounce his final judgment on us, we will not be thrown away because we will be one with the One who is our righteousness. This is why the abundant life is also eternal life: we will live forever in the joy of our God because we will be one with him who is eternal life. "This is eternal life," said Jesus in his prayer to his Father, "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

To enjoy the benefits of this abundant life, we must be set free from the sin that enslaves us. This, too, is accomplished through knowing Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He also said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He desires to set us free from the sin that has separated us from him because he wants us to live forever in his house with him.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:34-36).

This was also God's desire for the Israelites. Though they had blasphemed his name and he had sent them into captivity in Babylon, he desired to have them once again live abundantly in the land he had promised to give them.

"Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers.... I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations" (Ezek. 36:28-30).

God told them they would enjoy this life once he set them free, not only from their slavery, but also from the reason they were in slavery in the first place.

“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” (Ezek. 36:24-25).

Vindicating the Name of God

However, he also made it clear to them that he was not setting them free to enjoy the abundant life just to give them life. He had a much more important purpose in mind.

“But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went”” (Ezek. 36:21-22).

He gave them life so that he could vindicate his name, not so much in the eyes of the Israelites as in the eyes of those around them. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God told the Israelites that he would vindicate his name through them in three related ways, the same ways he uses to vindicate his name through us.

First, he vindicates his name by causing us to be like him. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you...” (Ezek. 36:26-27). The Israelites’ heart was the cause of their

blasphemous behavior, so he promised he would stop the blasphemy by giving them a new heart and a new spirit, that is, *his* heart and *his* spirit and therefore *his* character. Those around them will then see that God is righteous and just and loving and merciful after all because they will see his character lived out through them.

Second, he vindicates his name by causing us to obey him. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:27). The Israelites will once again acknowledge that God's authority is not meaningless, that God is the supreme authority over them and over everyone else. God had said that if a man obeys his commands, he will live. The Israelites' continued obedience would prove to those around them that obeying God's commands does produce a good life. Therefore, the God who issued those commands must be righteous and just and loving and merciful after all.

Third, he vindicates his name by causing us to know him. "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:28). These are the words of a marriage ceremony. God is promising to restore the deep, intimate relationship he had had with the Israelites years before, for this relationship is the cure for blasphemy.

"Now therefore, what have I here," says the Lord,
"That My people are taken away for nothing?
Those who rule over them
Make them wail," says the Lord,
"And My name is blasphemed continually every day.

Therefore My people shall know My name;
Therefore they shall know in that day
That I am He who speaks:
'Behold, it is I'" (Is. 52:5-6).

Becoming one with God will empower the Israelites to obey him and will transform them until they become like him. Those around them will benefit from this restored relationship because once the Israelites come to know God as he really is, they will not be able to restrain themselves from proclaiming that God is a righteous and just and loving and merciful God after all.

Glorifying God

This is, in fact, the main reason why Jesus came to this earth: to proclaim to us that God is a righteous and just and loving and merciful God after all. Yes, he came to give us life and that more abundantly, but he accomplished that by accomplishing his primary purpose, that of vindicating his Father's name. On the night before his crucifixion, he said in his prayer to his Father, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." Which work did he finish? "I have glorified You on the earth" (John 17:4). What exactly did Jesus do when he glorified the Father? The Greek word for "glorify" originally meant, "to think, to suppose, to be of an opinion." By New Testament times it came to mean, "to praise, to extol, to ascribe the honor or glory to." Thus, to glorify God means to praise him, to extol him, to think well of him, to give him glory.

But what does it mean to give God glory? During one of his many meetings with God at the top of Mount Sinai, Moses asked God, "Please show me Your glory." God's response was, "No man can see Me and live." To see God's glory is to see God himself. As with life, glory is not just something he *has*—it is who he *is*. The glory of God is the character of God. Who, then, is he? God began his response with, "I will make all My goodness pass before you" (Exod. 33:18-20). The glory of God is his goodness. To give God glory, therefore, is to proclaim, or cause others to proclaim, the goodness of God. Jesus' primary purpose for coming was to proclaim the goodness of his Father and to cause others to see and proclaim his goodness. And he has told us that our primary purpose is to do the same: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

This means that we must first see the goodness of God in our own lives, even in times of affliction. Consider what Joseph had to endure. His brothers hated him, they planned to kill him, they threw him into a pit with the intention of leaving him there until he died, then they sold him into slavery, where he was falsely accused of rape and thrown into prison. Yet, God used him to save his brothers—as well as many other people—from certain starvation. After his father died, his brothers thought he would seek revenge on them. Instead, he comforted them with these words: "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:19-20). Joseph saw the goodness of God even in his afflictions. God

used Satan to bring affliction into Job's life. Satan will be condemned for doing so because he intended to bring evil against Job, to kill, steal and destroy all that Job had. But God will not be condemned for doing so because he meant it for good, to ultimately bring forth life in Job and in all of those who have been comforted by Job's story. God uses our afflictions to do the same. Satan intends to bring evil against us, but God will use our afflictions to bring good, to help us to glorify him and to show us and others just how good he really is.

In John 15, Jesus taught us how to glorify the Father and how to cause others to glorify our Father. "By this My Father is glorified," he said, "that you bear much fruit." What is the purpose of fruit? Fruit exists, not to preserve life for itself, but to give life to the seed. And if it is eaten, it provides life to the one who is destroying it. It gives its life so that others may live. This is what Jesus did for us. He came that we may have life, and that more abundantly. But he did not come to secure an abundant life for himself. He came offering it to others, and in the process, he glorified his Father. By laying down his life for us, we saw the goodness of God, who was willing to give up his Son so that we who had blasphemed him might once again enjoy an abundant life with him.

Jesus said we glorify God by doing the same. How do we bear much fruit? "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." How do we abide in him? "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love." What are his commandments? "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." How do we love one another? "Greater love has no man

than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." Ultimately, God is glorified when we lay down our lives for our friends.

Friends are people for whom we lay down our lives. Jesus wants to be our friend, which means he wants us to lay down our lives for him and for his friends, that is, the people for whom he died. If that means giving up the abundant life, then so be it. Paul said he would willingly be accursed and separated from Christ, condemned and separated from the Source of Abundant Life, if it would lead his fellow Israelites to find the eternal and abundant life in Jesus. One of the wonderful ironies of the kingdom of God is that we secure an abundant life for ourselves not by striving for it, but by offering it to others. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35). Our goal should not be to secure an abundant life for ourselves. Our goal should be the same as Jesus': vindicate and glorify the name of God by laying down our lives for his sake and the sake of others, thereby causing those others to glorify God. If we do so, God will secure an abundant life not only for us, but for those others as well.

This is precisely why we must learn to respond to our problems properly. We can no longer let our problems rob us of our enjoyment of God; instead, we must let our enjoyment of God conquer our problems. "Count it all joy," the Scriptures say, "when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4), the apostle commands us, meaning, of course, we must rejoice even when our problems seem overwhelming. When the people around us can see that we have the joy of the Lord despite terrible circumstances and

that our focus is on others even though our problems would normally cause us to focus on ourselves, then they, too, will see the goodness of God and they, too, will glorify God and they, too, will come to him so that they, too, can have this joyous and everlasting life. "But how," you may ask, "how can we rejoice in the Lord always?" We can if we look above and beyond our problems to see the awesome goodness of our wonderful God. Job did. With Elihu's help, Job stopped looking at his problems and got to see what he, the most righteous man on earth, had never seen before: the glorious and majestic face of God. And because he did, God has used his life to show others that they can do the same.

"From the rising of the sun," declares the one hundred and thirteenth Psalm, "to its going down / The Lord's name is to be praised." "Truly, as I live," declares God to his prophet, Moses, "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). You can be sure that God is going to vindicate his name. He will prove to all people once and for all that he is truly a good God. Not everyone will acknowledge his goodness. Many will bitterly reject his proof. Even so, God will have a people who will glorify and enjoy him forever. And he will have friends over whom he will rejoice. The question is, will you be one of them?

Four Ways in Which the Deceived Twist the Scriptures

In my junior high mathematics textbook, I found a deceptively simple logic problem:

I have in my hand two American coins. Together they total 55 cents. One of the coins is not a nickel. What are the two coins?

Tried as I might, I could not solve the problem, so I finally looked up the answer in the back of the book. The two coins are a half dollar and a nickel. My first thought when I saw the answer was, "Wait. One of them is not supposed to be a nickel." Then I realized that the answer was correct. One of the coins was indeed *not* a nickel: it was a half dollar. I could not solve the problem because I had subconsciously assumed that the statement, "One of the coins is not a nickel," meant "*Neither* one of the coins is a nickel." My false assumption kept me from seeing the truth.

The Scriptures imply that we should do what the Bereans did when Paul and Silas came to their city to preach the Gospel:

“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men” (Acts 17:10-12).

The Bereans did not just take Paul’s word that he was teaching them the truth. They compared what he taught with the Scriptures to see if it was true. We should do the same whenever anyone claims to be teaching us the truth.

The reason for doing so should be obvious. Peter warns us that false teachers will rise up from *within* the Church:

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has

not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber” (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

These false teachers will not be cult leaders—their deception will be recognized immediately. These will be people from within the Church itself, even respected leaders, who will bring in destructive heresies.

Why will they do so? Peter says they will do so because of covetousness. And why will people listen to them? Paul says they will do so because their false teaching will satisfy people's desires: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). In other words, the false teachers will teach deception and the people will follow the deception to satisfy their lusts. As Matthew Henry said so long ago, “Whatever doctrine favors the corrupt lusts of men cannot be of God.”

We can recognize these deceptions if we compare the teachings with the Scriptures. The problem is that these false teachers will use the Scriptures to support their false teachings. Peter tells us that in the Scriptures there “are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). The deceived twist the Scriptures in at least four different ways in an attempt to make the Scriptures support their false teachings. These four ways are based on four false assumptions. These false assumptions keep the deceived from seeing the truth in the first place, which is why they twist the

Scriptures. Today we will look at these four assumptions. We can find all four of these assumptions in the story of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11. We looked at this story before to see the four ways in which we limit God. Now we will look at this story to see the four ways in which the deceived twist the Scriptures. Learning these ways will help us to recognize when someone who appears to be teaching us the truth from the Scriptures is in fact deceiving us by employing these very ways. As an added benefit, learning these ways will also give us four reasons why we should study the Scriptures for ourselves.

Human Thinking

First, the deceived assume that God thinks like we do.

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was (11:1-6).

The sisters assumed that Jesus would immediately come to heal Lazarus because Jesus loved Lazarus. That is how we

think. But Jesus did not do that. Instead, he waited two more days. Because he loved them. And because God does not think like we do.

Some people's teaching on healing assumes that God thinks like we do. John Bevere is the head of Messenger International, a Bible teacher, and an author. In the video series accompanying his book, *Extraordinary*, he says that the notion that God is trying to teach us something through our sickness is just an excuse for our lack of faith. The Church has done a good job of teaching people that they can access God's grace through faith, but it has not done a good job of teaching people that they can also access God's healing through that same faith. In other words, if we Christians truly had faith, none of us would be sick.

Bill Johnson, the pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, California, also rejects the notion that God teaches us through our sickness:

When I have misconceptions of who He is and what He is like, my faith is restricted by those misconceptions. For example, if I believe that God allows sickness in order to build character, I'll not have confidence praying in most situations where healing is needed. But, if I believe that sickness is to the body what sin is to the soul, then no disease will intimidate me. Faith is much more free to develop when we truly see the heart of God as good.

The same misconceptions of God affect those who need to have faith for their own miracle. A woman who needed a miracle once told me that she felt God

had allowed her sickness for a purpose. I told her that if I treated my children that way I'd be arrested for child abuse (*When Heaven Invades Earth*, p. 58, 2003 edition).

To Johnson's way of thinking, if we continually ask God to heal us and he does not, we are lacking faith or God is not good. And to his way of thinking, God is a child abuser if he brings sickness upon us to teach us and to build our character. But God is good and God is not a child abuser, so the problem is our lack of faith. Again, if we Christians truly had faith, none of us would be sick.

But God does not think like we do. He plainly tells us so in the Scriptures:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says 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" (Is. 55:8-9).

The sisters asked Jesus to heal Lazarus, but Lazarus died anyway, not because of their lack of faith or because Jesus was not good or because Jesus was an abuser or even a murderer, but because Jesus *loved* them. Jesus let Lazarus die so that he could resurrect him. Lazarus' death and subsequent resurrection allowed the sisters to see the glory of God (John 11:40), built the faith of the disciples (11:15), and led many to salvation (11:45). None of this would have happened if Jesus had simply healed Lazarus.

Our thoughts and our ways tell us that we would be bad and we would be child abusers if we deliberately brought sickness upon our children. That is because we do not have the right to do so. But God has that right. God's thoughts and God's ways say that God is good and God is not a child abuser even when he sends sickness to teach us something new.

Job was the most righteous man in his generation, yet he suffered great losses and sickness. Yes, Satan brought those troubles upon him, but the Scriptures clearly tell us that he was only the intermediary, that God himself brought these adversities upon Job:

...and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him (42:11).

Job and his "comforters" argue over why all this adversity has come upon him. Job, thinking like Bill Johnson does, even questions God's goodness (40:2, 8). At the end of the fruitless debate, a young man named Elihu stands up and by the power of the Holy Spirit (32:18; 33:4) tells Job that adversity comes upon people so that God can teach them:

"Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out;
They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty.
But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker,
Who gives us songs in the night,
Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth,
And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?'" (35:9-11).

This is why our first response to adversity, including sickness, should not be chastising ourselves for our lack of faith but asking God to teach us what we are supposed to learn from this:

“For has anyone said to God,
‘I have borne chastening;
I will offend no more;
Teach me what I do not see;
If I have done iniquity, I will do no more?’” (34:31-32).

Job does learn from his adversities and sickness:

“I know that You can do everything,
And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from
You....
I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me,
Which I did not know” (42:2-3).

And Job gets to see something he had not seen before:

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You” (42:5).

Bevere and Johnson are wrong. God does use sickness to teach us something new.

The deceived assume that God thinks like we do. We, however, should study the Scriptures so that we can conform our way of thinking to God’s way of thinking.

Human Definition

Second, the deceived assume that God defines words the same way we do.

These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."

However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep (11:11-13).

The disciples misunderstood Jesus because they assumed he was defining "sleep" the same way they were.

The teachers in the Word of Faith movement often assume that their definitions of words are also God's definitions for those words. For example, they assume that God defines "good" and "love" the way that they do. Under "Our Beliefs," the website for the Abundant Living Faith Center in El Paso, Texas, says, "God is good. He is for us—not against us. He does not use tragedy, illness or acts of nature to teach us." Kenneth E. Hagin, in his book, *Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness, and Spiritual Death*, says,

It is not the will of God that we be sick. In Bible days, it was not God's will for the children of Israel to be sick, and they were God's servants. Today, we are God's children. If it was not His will for even His servants to be sick, it could not be His will for His children to be

sick! Sickness and disease are not of love. God is love (as quoted by <http://www.cfaith.com/index.php/-article-display/18-articles/healing/15011-sickness-blessing-or-curse>).

Yet, when Jesus, who is always good, heard that Lazarus was sick, he did not rush off to heal him. Instead, he made Lazarus endure two more days of sickness and even let him die before he departed for Bethany. And John specifically tells us that he did so *because* he loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. So Jesus' definitions for "good" and "love" must differ from those of the teachers in the Word of Faith movement.

Paul told the Corinthians that some of them were sick and some of them had died because God was chastening them for unworthily participating in the Lord's Supper. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that God chastens those whom he loves (Heb. 12:5-6). So God was using sickness and even death to chasten the Corinthians because he loved them so much, he wanted to keep them from being condemned with the rest of the world (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

The teachers in the Word of Faith movement are wrong. God does use sickness to teach and to chasten us. And he does so because he is good and because he is love.

The deceived assume that God defines words the same way we do. We, however, should study the Scriptures to discover God's definitions for words.

Human Culture

Third, the deceived assume that God is bound by our cultural standards.

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days (11:17).

Jesus deliberately waited until the fourth day. In the Jewish culture of that time there was a belief that the spirit of the deceased stayed near the body for three days. At the end of the third day, however, it departed. There was a hope that the deceased could be resurrected within the three days because the spirit was still nearby, but from the fourth day on, there was no hope. Jesus resurrected Lazarus on the fourth day to prove to the Jews that he was not bound by their beliefs or their culture.

We have seen churches adopt the ever changing standards of our culture time and time again. The women's rights movement began and now churches are ordaining women as pastors. The gay rights movement began and now more and more churches are saying that homosexuality is no longer a sin. The Word of Faith teaching is also a product of our culture. Our culture exalts health and wealth and the Word of Faith teaching says that God wants to give you and *must* give you health and wealth if you have enough faith to claim it for yourself.

But that teaching did not work for Paul and the apostles in the culture of the first century:

To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the

world, the offscouring of all things until now (1 Cor. 4:11-13).

And that teaching did not work for Mary and Martha in their culture. They had faith that Jesus could heal their brother. We know that because when Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, they said to him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” But he did die. That is because Jesus is not bound by the standards of any culture—or any teaching.

The Word of Faith teachers are wrong. God is not bound by our cultural standards. In fact, “He does whatever *He* pleases” (Ps. 115:3).

The deceived assume that God is bound by our cultural standards. We, however, should study the Scriptures so that we can bind ourselves to God’s standards.

Human Beliefs

Fourth, the deceived assume that the Scriptures must fit their beliefs—instead of the other way around.

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (11:23-24).

Jesus meant that Lazarus will rise again *today*, but Martha thought Jesus meant that Lazarus will rise again at the last day. She misunderstood Jesus because she filtered his statement through her set of beliefs. She made his statement fit what she already believed.

For the deceived, their beliefs actually take priority over the Scriptures. If they receive a new so-called "revelation from the Holy Spirit" that happens to contradict the Scriptures, the revelation wins out. If you point out Scriptures that are contrary to their beliefs, they dismiss them by saying, "That's just your interpretation."

But their favorite thing to do is to simply ignore Scriptures that are contrary to their beliefs. In his book, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, Bill Johnson teaches that for the Christian who is walking by faith, everything should be "on earth as it is in heaven." Since there is no sickness in heaven, there should be no sickness on earth. Since there is no poverty in heaven, there should be no poverty on earth. He tells his readers that there are many benefits to faith which the believer can have now and then he takes the readers verse by verse through Hebrews 11 to point out those benefits. However, he quietly and conveniently skips verses 13-16:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

In other words, he skips the verses that say that we do not always get the benefits now, that we may get them later, after we die.

And he quietly and conveniently skips verses 35-40:

Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

In other words, he skips the verses that say that faith does not always bring benefits. He deliberately skips the Scriptures that are contrary to his beliefs, thereby making the Scriptures fit his beliefs rather than making his beliefs fit the Scriptures.

The Word of Faith teachers are wrong. The Scriptures, *all* of the Scriptures, take priority over our beliefs. Acknowledging some Scriptures and ignoring others only leads to error.

The deceived assume that the Scriptures must fit their beliefs. We, however, should study the Scriptures to make our beliefs fit the Scriptures.

Conclusion

These, then, are the four ways in which the deceived twist the Scriptures. These four ways are based on four assumptions, which the deceived may not know they are making. They may be making these assumptions subconsciously. And it is possible that we, too, may be making one or more of these assumptions subconsciously. So, once in a while, we need to ask ourselves some questions. Are we doing the same thing? Are we assuming that God thinks like we do? Are we assuming that the words in Scripture are defined the way we define them? Are we expecting God to act according to our cultural standards? Are we making the Scriptures fit our beliefs so we can go on doing what we want to do? Do our beliefs feed our lusts or do they lead us to kill off our lusts?

Deception already exists *within* the Church in many different forms. If we do not keep ourselves in the Scriptures, *all* of the Scriptures, it will pull us in.

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

The Word on Healing

When Will the Redemptive Work of Christ Be Fully Manifested?

Some time ago, a minister in the Word of Faith movement challenged me to read and respond to two books on healing: the 2000 edition of *Christ the Healer* by F.F. Bosworth and *Bodily Healing and the Atonement* by Dr. T.J. McCrossan as reedited by Roy Hicks and Kenneth E. Hagin. Both men advocate that it is God's will to heal every sick person on this earth in this lifetime. I gladly chose to read and respond to these books because I see a danger in this teaching. I am concerned that this teaching could ultimately cause some people to walk away from the Christian faith altogether, causing them to perish eternally.

These men preach that a person can be saved by putting their faith in Jesus Christ. They also preach that a person can be healed by putting their faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, they preach that the healing message is included in the gospel message, that the faith that produces salvation is also

the faith that produces healing. But what if a person who hears their message never gets healed? What will these men say in their defense on judgment day when that person says to them, "You said that I would be healed if I put my faith in Jesus Christ. But that was a lie. You also said that I would be saved if I put my faith in Jesus Christ. But I thought that was a lie, also"?

Joni Eareckson Tada is a Christian. She is also a quadriplegic. She was paralyzed from the neck down during a diving accident in her teens. She has been able to demonstrate that it is possible to live a life filled with "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17) even though one is disabled. Through her radio ministry she has encouraged thousands to endure in the faith despite their circumstances. Naturally, many disabled persons seek her out for counsel and advice. In other words, God has used her sickness to benefit others. She, too, is concerned about the effect this teaching is having on some people:

Handicapped people are puzzled, and I can't say that I blame them....

A Heinz-57-variety of theological "answers" on the subject of healing appear [*sic*] in books, seminars, tapes, and on Christian television and radio. The mail we receive at Joni and Friends is full of questions, perplexity, and outright frustration.

I had to see for myself, so I flicked on Sunday evening television last week. Sure enough, the clergyman at the microphone was expounding that God WANTS you well so you CAN and SHOULD be well.

I just wish that TV preacher could visit our office, sit quietly for a few hours, and read some of the letters we receive from disabled people who have viewed his program. After years of praying, these people have nearly had their faith shipwrecked by the "health-wealth" way of looking at their problems (*Secret Strength*, p. 307).

I am concerned that these men, and the others who preach the same message, are in danger of shipwrecking the faith of some because they refuse to see that God has good reasons for *not* healing some people on this earth, in this lifetime.

What are those reasons? We will get to those reasons, but first I must lay a foundation. Let me begin by looking at the beliefs these men and I hold in common.

1. Christ's death on the cross atoned for our sins and redeemed us from sin and God's certain judgment.
2. Christ's death on the cross also redeemed us from the effects of sin, including death and sickness.
3. God has promised healing to all believers. This promise was made possible by Christ's atoning work on the cross.

Where we part ways is in saying *when* this redemption will be fully manifested. Let us look at the facts:

1. Christ has redeemed all the believers from sin—but *we still sin* (Rom. 7:25; 1 John 1:8).

2. Christ has redeemed all the believers from the effects of sin, including death—*but we still die* (Heb. 9:27).

3. Christ has redeemed all the believers from the effects of sin, including sickness—*but some are still sick* (1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 2:20; Phil. 2:25-30; 1 Cor. 11:30).

The writers of the Scriptures are so certain that future events will come to pass that they often speak of them as if they have already happened. For example, Christ is described as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). At the time the foundation of the world was laid, the cross was still a future event, yet God was so certain it would come to pass that he thought of Christ as already slain. Similarly, Peter says that we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” who “was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet. 1:19-20). God had foreordained the work of the cross before the foundation of the world, but it was not *manifest* until later. McCrossan points out that in Matt. 12:17 the Gospel writer viewed Is. 42:1-4 as already fulfilled even though its fulfillment will not be completely manifested until Jesus sets up his millennial kingdom (pp. 14-16). Applying this same truth to Matt. 8:16, 17 where the Gospel writer sees Is. 53:4 as already fulfilled, McCrossan says, “*This, then, is positive proof to every real Greek scholar and to all unprejudiced minds that Matthew 8:16, 17 is a prediction which will not be completely fulfilled until the end of the Church Age*” (pp. 16-17, italics are McCrossan’s). This is

where we disagree. Bosworth and others see Is. 53:4 as being completely fulfilled every day whereas I see it as not being completely fulfilled until the end of this age, as McCrossan himself says.

The Scriptures view the redemptive work of Christ the same way that Matthew viewed the prophecies of Isaiah: as both fulfilled now, yet to be fulfilled later. Some Scriptures see the redemptive work of Christ as already accomplished, a work that was finished on the cross, which is why Jesus on the cross said, "It is finished." But other Scriptures see the redemptive work as a process that will be finished in the future. For example, Jesus' death on the cross made our salvation possible. We know that to be saved all we have to do is put our faith in Jesus Christ and those of us who have done so often speak of our salvation as an act that was completed in the past. Paul does this, too: "Share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us..." (2 Tim. 1:8-9). But Paul also speaks of salvation as an ongoing process ("Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you..." [Phil. 2:12-13]), which will not be finished until Christ comes back: "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we *shall be saved* from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we *shall be saved* by His life" (Rom. 5:9-10). Peter tells us that we "are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed *in the last time*" (1 Pet. 1:5). The writer of Hebrews says, "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from

sin, *for salvation*" (Heb. 9:28). Our salvation will be complete when Christ appears again, but the writers of the Scriptures are so certain this event will happen that they speak of it as if it has already been accomplished.

The process of cleansing us from our sins and setting us apart for service unto God is called sanctification. But that is precisely what it is: a *process*. Those who teach that it is God's will to heal everyone make a big point out of the fact that Peter says, "by whose stripes you *were* healed" (1 Pet. 2:24), meaning that healing for all the believers is an accomplished work. However, Paul says to the Corinthians, "But you *were* washed, but you *were* sanctified, but you *were* justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11), as if sanctification is an accomplished work, completed in the past. Yet other Scriptures see it as an ongoing process: "For both He who sanctifies and those *who are being sanctified* are all of one..." (Heb. 2:11). "For by one offering He has perfected forever those *who are being sanctified*" (Heb. 10:14). In fact, we are commanded not to treat sanctification as a finished work but to participate in the process: "Pursue peace with all people, and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). The Greek word for "sanctification" in this verse is often translated as "holiness" because that is the goal of sanctification: to become holy. And when will this process end? "We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

The Scriptures tell us that God's purpose and grace "has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death..." (2 Tim. 1:10). This sounds like a work accomplished in the past. Does this not mean, therefore, that the believer should never die? On this point, Bosworth is inconsistent. He favorably quotes from a writer who asks, "Is it true that God will give deliverance from every penalty and consequence of sin *except one*, and that this one (sickness) must inevitably remain to the bitter end? Away with such a thought!" (p. 41). Yet, only a few pages later, he writes, "Now I hear someone say, 'If healing is for all, then we shall never die.' Why not? Divine healing goes no further than the promise of God. He does not promise that we shall never die..." (p.50). He then favorably quotes from the Rev. P. Gavin Duffy: "He has allotted to man a certain span of life, and His will is that life shall be lived out" (p. 51). Bosworth conveniently forgets that death is one of the consequences of sin and the ULTIMATE penalty for sin. If it is wrong to preach that God will give deliverance from every penalty and consequence of sin except sickness, is it not equally wrong to preach that God will give deliverance from every penalty and consequence of sin except death? And Bosworth conveniently forgets that it may be God's will now for men to live out their lives over a certain span, but it was originally God's will for men to live out their lives *forever*. And that is still his will, which is why he offers *eternal* life to the believers. And he conveniently forgets that God did promise that we shall never die. Did not Jesus say to Martha, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:26)? When we preach the Gospel, we tell people that if they put their faith in Jesus, they

shall be delivered from their sins. Bosworth contends that when we preach the Gospel, we should also tell people that if they put their faith in Jesus, they shall be delivered from their sicknesses. So, when we preach the Gospel, should not we also tell them that if they put their faith in Jesus, they shall be delivered from death?

That we believers still die, that in fact we have been *appointed* to die (Heb. 9:27), even though Jesus abolished death when he died on the cross, is proof that the redemptive work of Christ is not yet fully manifested. The Scriptures tell us that the abolishment of death will not be fully manifested until the last trumpet sounds. "Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

This passage points out why we keep sinning even though Jesus has redeemed us from sin, why we keep dying even though Jesus has abolished death, and why some believers experience sickness even though Jesus has redeemed us from sickness. The problem is that *we are still in this corruptible, mortal body*. Paul refers to this corruptible, mortal body as "the body of sin" (Rom. 6:6) and "this body of death" (Rom. 7:24). Our spirits have been born again, but our bodies have not been. We have been redeemed from sin and

death and sickness by the work of Christ on the cross, but our bodies have not yet been redeemed: "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23). Our bodies will not be born again, our bodies will not be redeemed, until they put on incorruption and immortality, that is, when they die (or change) and are resurrected. Even though Jesus has redeemed us from sin and death and pain and sorrow and sickness, we will continue to experience every one of these things as long as we continue to dwell in these bodies of sin and death.

Even McCrossan came to this same conclusion:

In Romans 8:23, Paul uses the word *apolutrōsis*. This is derived from *apo*, from, and *lutroo*, "I set free after a ransom has been paid." Then *apolutrōsis* (redemption) in Romans 8:23 means "a setting free of what has already been ransomed."

In First Corinthians 6:19, 20 Paul declares that we have now been "redeemed" (*agorazo*), body and spirit, by having the price paid for us. In Galatians 3:13 he asserts we have been "redeemed," or "bought out from under" (*exagorazo*) the curse of law; but, as yet, we have not experienced "redemption" (*apolutrōsis*, Rom. 8:23) in the sense that we are now entirely freed from all the evil results of our former bondage to Satan. Our bodies are still subject to pain, sickness, and death, and will be until we receive our glorified bodies—the redemption which Paul calls *apolutrōsis* (Rom. 8:23)....

Our spirits also, like our bodies, are still awaiting this same "redemption" (apolutrōsis), for Paul says (Rom 8:23), "...we ourselves [hemeis autoi] groan within ourselves." "We ourselves" here refers to our spirits, which inhabit and control our bodies. We are absolutely sure of this, because the pronoun "we" (hemeis) is the very same word that we find in Revelation 1:5, "...and washed us [hemas, Accusative of hemeis] from our sins in his own blood." Then our redeemed spirits, which have been washed from sin, as well as our redeemed bodies, can now groan and suffer pain. The word "groan" (stenazo) means to sigh deeply, or moan with pain and anguish, whether mental or physical.

Yes, our spirits, as well as our bodies, can now suffer sorrow, pain, and anguish.

All will be changed, however, when this redemption, called *apolutrōsis* (the setting free from), takes place. When this "redemption," *apolutrōsis* (Rom. 8:23), does take place, then both our spirits and our bodies will be completely free from sorrow, pain, weeping, and all the consequences of the sin bondage from which Christ has already redeemed us by His awful scourging and death. See Revelation 21:4. (See note II, Addenda Notes.) [pp. 30-32, italics are McCrossan's].

When we turn to note II in the Addenda Notes, this is what we find:

II. From page 32. Listen to Ephesians 1:14, "Which [the Spirit] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption [*apolutrōsis*] of the purchased possession." Paul here declares that we have already been purchased, the price for our redemption has been paid, but *we are not yet free from the consequences of our former sinful state*. This complete and final future freedom Paul here terms our *apolutrōsis* (p. 97, italics mine).

So, even McCrossan acknowledges, based on his study of Scripture, that we can experience the consequences of sin, including sorrow, pain, anguish and sickness until our bodies are redeemed and glorified. Back on page 32, he cites Revelation 21:4, which means that he believes the redemption of our bodies and the completion of Christ's redemptive work will not take place until the New Jerusalem comes down upon the new earth. That is when *all* of the believers will be finally and completely free of sin and finally and completely free from death and finally and completely healed because when the New Jerusalem descends, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

When Will God Fulfill His Promises?

We can come to this same conclusion when we approach the issue from another angle. Bosworth and McCrossan are correct when they say that God has promised healing to all believers. He has also made several other

promises to his people. The problem is that God rarely says *when* he will fulfill his promises.

Bosworth did not get far in his book before he inadvertently touched upon this problem. On page 18, he writes,

Following this with the observance of Hebrews 10:35-36, we can *always* bring to pass the fulfillment of any divine promise. It is God's will for every Christian to successfully practice Hebrews 6:11-12.

This is what Hebrews 6:11-12 says:

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

So we inherit the promises through faith *and patience*, which means that sometimes we have to wait for God to fulfill his promises. How long do we have to wait? Consider the example the writer of Hebrews uses to illustrate his point:

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise (Heb. 6:13-15).

God gave this promise to Abraham on the mountain just after he almost sacrificed his son, Isaac. The full promise was, "Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies" (Gen. 22:17). When did Abraham obtain this promise? Not in his earthly lifetime. Abraham did not live long enough on this earth to see that promise fulfilled. He saw its fulfillment only after he went to heaven.

Interestingly, Bosworth also cites Abraham as an example in an attempt to prove his point. He writes, "...God's way of doing everything is by making promises and then by fulfilling them wherever they produce faith. He says it is with us as with Abraham" (p. 116). He then goes on to show that because of Abraham's faith, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Yes, God had promised to Abraham a seed. And yes, that promise was fulfilled when Isaac was born. So the life of Abraham proves that sometimes God's promises are fulfilled here on this earth, in this lifetime. But the life of Abraham also proves that *sometimes they are not*. Sometimes God heals people on this earth in this lifetime; *sometimes he does not*.

Bosworth says "we can *always* bring to pass the fulfillment of any divine promise" by observing Hebrews 10:35-36:

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

So we receive the promise only after we have done the will of God for some unstated period of time, meaning that God again makes us wait for the fulfillment of his promise because we have need of endurance. And what promise is the writer of Hebrews referring to this time?

For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry
(Heb. 10:37).

The promise to which he is referring is the second coming of Christ, one of the greatest promises ever given to the believers. Yet, even Jesus did not know *when* this promise will be fulfilled. Many, many, many believers have already died without seeing this promise fulfilled. Indeed, the vast majority of believers will be in heaven when this is fulfilled.

The problem that the writer of Hebrews was addressing is that the believers of his day were walking by faith, but they were *not* seeing the promises of God being fulfilled in their lifetime on this earth. That is why in chapter 10 he tells them they have need of endurance. He immediately follows up this statement with chapter 11, in which he lists most of the Old Testament saints who had lived by faith. Bosworth is correct when he says, "The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews records the actions of God's saints in the faith realm *before* the results of their faith took visible form" (p. 149). What he neglects to mention is that for many of these saints, the results of their faith did not take visible form until *after their deaths*, which tells me that Bosworth is missing the whole point of the chapter.

The point is not just that they had lived by faith, but that they did the will of God with endurance because of their faith. We know this because at the end of his list, the writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore [that is, the conclusion we should draw from this list is:] we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run *with endurance* the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). He encourages his readers by reminding them that these Old Testament saints, "having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise" (Heb. 11:39) in their lifetimes on this earth either. So why did they endure?

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Heb. 11:13-16).

They endured because they knew that this lifetime was not their only lifetime. They endured because they knew by faith that if the promises of God were not fulfilled in this lifetime, they would *eventually* be fulfilled in the city that is yet to come. That is why they sought for this city.

And that is why we are told to seek this same city: "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Heb. 13:14).

We often forget that this earth is not our home. Some preachers, such as Bill Johnson of Bethel Church in Redding, California, would have us believe that we should have perfect health and perfect wealth now because the Bible says "on earth as it is in heaven." Since there is no sickness or poverty in heaven, there should be no sickness or poverty for the believers here on earth. Those who teach that forget that we are only passing through this land, that we are not home yet. And they forget that we live in a war zone, for we are at war with Satan and his demons. Suppose a young private serving a tour of duty in a war zone went to his commanding officer and said, "Sir, back home I lived in a nice, warm house, not a cold, drafty tent, and I ate nice, home-cooked meals, not these miserable rations, and slept in a nice, comfortable bed, not in a sleeping bag on an uncomfortable cot. I demand that conditions here be the same as they are at home." His commanding officer would have every right to throw him out on his ear for speaking such nonsense. He can enjoy those amenities once he gets home. Until then, he must endure.

What all of this means is that the promises of God will *eventually* be fulfilled. *Eventually* all of us will be free of sin. *Eventually* all of us will never die. *Eventually* all of us will be healed. That eventuality was made possible by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross but that eventuality will not come until we put off these corrupt, mortal bodies of sin and death and put on incorruptible, immortal bodies. And it will not come

until the city which God has prepared for us, the New Jerusalem, descends out of heaven to be on the new earth.

This also means that when God does heal someone here on this earth in this lifetime, it is *not* a sign that he has now completely fulfilled his promise, nor does it mean that the redemptive work of Christ is now completely fulfilled, because no matter how often God heals a person, that person still lives in a corrupt, mortal body. The promise of God and the redemptive work of Christ will not be completely fulfilled until that person obtains an incorruptible and immortal body that will not die or get sick ever again.

Paul tells us that what every true believer really wants from God is not just healing but a new body (2 Cor. 5:1-7). "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan (*stenazo*, the same word used in Rom. 8:23, which means to moan in pain and anguish, whether spiritual or *physical*), earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan (*stenazo* again), being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life." Deep down inside, we want more than just the healing of this corruptible, mortal body because deep down inside, we know that even when this body is in perfect health, it is still "perishing" (2 Cor. 4:16) and will eventually die. That is why we still groan. What we really want is an incorruptible, immortal body that will never again need healing because it will never get sick and never die. And the desire for this new

body has been placed inside us by God himself. "Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee" (*arrabon*, the same word used in Eph. 1:14, where it is translated "earnest"). Eph. 1:14 reminds us that the giving of the Spirit of promise as an earnest means that our redemption is not yet fully manifested but will be some day. Here in 2 Cor., Paul says that the giving of the Spirit as a guarantee means that our redemption includes receiving an incorruptible, immortal body which we have not received yet, but we can be assured that it is waiting for us in the heavens. "So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight." Do you see what Paul is saying? We walk by faith not because we are looking for some temporary manifestation of his promise here and now but because we are looking for the *eternal* fulfillment of his promise in the future when we are clothed with our new bodies. Walking by faith means that we are confident that God will one day give us the incorruptible, immortal body for which we long. Walking by faith means that we are confident that God will fulfill his promises *eventually*, even though we do not see them fulfilled *now*. So the message we should be telling the believers is not that God has guaranteed that *all* will be healed in this lifetime on this earth. The message should be, "Even if God does not heal you now, he will *then*. So don't give up. Continue walking by faith. Endure."

Instant Healing

God will heal *some* sick people *now* but will heal *all* believers *eventually*. And when he does heal now, he always

heals instantly. As we shall see, there are five instances in the four Gospels in which Jesus healed a blind man (or in two cases, two blind men), and in each instance what Jesus did and/or said to heal the person(s) was different. However, besides the fact that all the men were blind, there is one outstanding factor that is common to all five instances: *each man was healed immediately*. Moreover, each man's healing and the manifestation of that healing occurred *at the same time*.

This was true of all of Jesus' healings: once he began to heal someone, the healing came immediately. Jesus made Lazarus wait two more days for his healing, but once he began the healing process by calling him out of the grave, Lazarus was resurrected and healed immediately. The same was true of the healings performed by Paul and the other disciples in the Book of Acts. Once they began to heal someone, the healing and its manifestation occurred immediately.

To be sure, Jesus sometimes made people do something before they received their healing, but once they did what they were told, the healing and its manifestation occurred immediately. Jesus told the man who had been born blind to wash himself in the Pool of Siloam. When he did, he immediately received his sight. Jesus told the ten lepers to go and show themselves to the priest. As they went, they were healed immediately. The manifestation of that healing did not come days later. We know that because the leper who returned to give thanks found Jesus in the very place he had left him. Nobody but nobody ever had to wait days, weeks, months or years before their healing was manifested. Nobody.

The Scriptures tell us repeatedly that the multitudes who followed Jesus marveled and/or glorified God when they saw the healings he performed (Matt. 9:8, 33; Luke 7:16). This means that they saw the *manifestations* of the healings right then and there. Why would they glorify God if they saw the sick come to Jesus and then walk away from him, still manifesting their sickness? To the multitudes, a person who has been healed but does not yet manifest that healing is no different than a person who has not been healed at all. So if the healings Jesus performed were not manifested immediately, how were they to know whether Jesus had really healed the person or was just a charlatan? No, they knew Jesus was genuine because they saw the healings manifested immediately. As Matthew tells us,

So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel (Matt. 15:31, italics mine).

Whenever a blind person came to Jesus, he walked away seeing. Whenever a mute person came to Jesus, he walked away speaking. Whenever a lame person came to Jesus, he literally *walked* away. The healing and the manifestation of that healing always occurred at the same time. Always.

This fact is contrary to what Bosworth would have us believe. He would have us believe that the healing of a person and the manifestation of that healing can be two different events which can occur at two different times. He would have us believe that we are already healed because the Word of

God says we are, even though we may still be experiencing the symptoms of sickness. He sees symptoms as evidence that the *manifestation* of the healing has not yet occurred. What this tells me is that at times Bosworth would pray for some people but their healing would not be manifested immediately. So he sent them away, *still sick*, with the teaching that they should believe that they have in fact been healed even though their symptoms are telling them otherwise. I CHALLENGE anyone to show me even ONE instance where Jesus—or Peter or Paul or anyone else in the Bible for that matter—ever taught this. I challenge anyone to show me even ONE instance in which Jesus or anyone else sent a sick person away, *still manifesting the symptoms of their sickness*, and told them they should believe they were healed in spite of their symptoms. I also ask you to explain how Bosworth's teaching is different from what a charlatan might tell those who walk away still sick.

Contrary to Bosworth's teaching, Jesus saw symptoms as evidence that the *healing* had not yet occurred. In one instance, he took a blind man away from the crowd, spat on his eyes and laid his hands on him. He then asked the man what he saw. The man said, "I see men like trees, walking." Jesus did not say to him, "I know that your lying vanities, which you call symptoms, are telling you that you have not been healed yet. But I want you to believe that I have already healed you simply because the Word of God says that you have already been healed. And if you continue to believe that long enough, then the manifestation of that healing will eventually occur." Instead, Jesus took his symptoms as evidence that the healing was not yet complete. So he laid

hands on him again “and he was restored and saw everyone clearly” (Mark 8:22-26). Jesus stayed with him until he was *actually* healed. He did not make him wait for days, weeks, months or years for the manifestation of his healing. He made that healing manifest itself *immediately*.

Despite what the Scriptures actually say, Bosworth insists that not all healings occur immediately. In fact, he says that some people do not get healed *because* they expect it to happen immediately: “Because of improper instruction, many fail to be healed because they endeavor to confine God to miracles. Because they are not made well and strong in an instant, these people cast away their confidence” (p. 197). To support his teaching, he says that there is a difference between miracles and healing. Most people see healing as a sub-category of miracles, that is, they see miracles as including walking on water, turning water into wine, healing anybody who is sick, etc. Bosworth insists that healing is a category separate from miracles. Moreover, the difference between the two is the amount of time it takes to accomplish them. Miracles occur immediately, but healing occurs gradually.

The Bible differentiates between the “gifts of healing” and the gift of “miracles.” Christ could do no *miracle* in Nazareth because of their unbelief, but He healed a few sick ones. If everyone were to be made perfectly whole instantly, there would be no place for the gifts of healing. It would all be miracles. Many people miss healing by trying to confine God to miracles. Christ’s

promise is that "they shall recover," but He does not say "instantly" (p. 106, italics his).

Bosworth tries to justify his contention that healing is a category separate from miracles by referring to the list of gifts in 1 Cor. 12, where both miracles and healing are listed, and by referring to Mark 6:5 which says, "Now He could do no mighty work (miracle) there (in Nazareth), except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them." This is the same thing as saying that the only miracle Jesus could do was lay his hands on some and heal them. It does not necessarily mean that miracles and healing are two separate things. However, the major weakness in his argument is shown in that he does not provide any Scriptural support whatsoever to show that the difference between the two is the amount of time they take. He cannot provide that support because the Scriptures do not provide that support. In fact, the Scriptures show that the difference between them is *not* the amount of time.

The Greek word for miracles in 1 Cor. 12 is *dunamis* and the Greek word for healing is *iaoma*, a noun that appears in the Scriptures only in 1 Cor. 12. The verb form of the word is *iaomai*. We find the two words together in Luke 5:17: "And the power (*dunamis*) of the Lord was present to heal (*iaomai*) them." They also appear together in Luke 6:19: "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power (*dunamis*) went out from Him and healed (*iaomai*) them all." They also appear together in Acts 10:38: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power (*dunamis*), who went about doing good and healing (*iaomai*) all who were

oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." In each case, the healing was accomplished by the miraculous power of God. So the Scriptures see healing as included within miracles, not separate from them.

The story of the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years is well known (Luke 8:43-48). After she touched Jesus' robe, he said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power (*dunamis*) going out of Me." The woman finally came forward and confessed "the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed (*iaomai*) immediately." This story says that the woman's healing was a miracle, which means that healing is included in the category of miracles, and that the healing occurred immediately, not gradually, which means that Bosworth's distinction between miracles and healing is wrong.

In Mark 6:5 the Greek word for mighty work or miracle is again *dunamis* and the Greek word for healed is *therapeuo*, from which we get our word "therapy." When Jesus laid his hands on the woman who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years, "immediately she was made straight." The ruler of the synagogue became upset "because Jesus had healed (*therapeuo*) on the Sabbath" (Luke 13:10-17). So this healing had occurred immediately. When Jesus said to the man at the pool of Bethesda, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," "immediately the man was made well." In the next verse, John refers to him as "him who was cured (*therapeuo*)" (John 5:1-15). So this healing had occurred immediately. When Peter grabbed the hand of the man who had been lame from his mother's womb and lifted him up, "immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." Later, Peter, John, and the man were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin,

who looked at “the man who had been healed (*therapeuo*)” (Acts 3:7; 4:14). So this healing had occurred immediately. *Therapeuo*, therefore, is a healing that occurs immediately, which makes it no different than a miracle. The Scriptures do not support Bosworth’s teaching that miracles and healings are two different categories and that miracles occur immediately while healings occur gradually.

What this means is that when a sick person asks God for a healing, he or she CAN expect it to occur *immediately*. What this also means is that if the healing does not occur immediately, it is NOT because the person has, in fact, been healed but God is testing the person’s faith by making the manifestation appear later: it is because the person has not, in fact, been healed at all. And what this means is that if the healing does not occur immediately, there must be a reason for it. The question is: which reason?

Imparted Faith

Many of the people who preach that it is God’s will to heal everyone on this earth in this lifetime say that there is only one reason why a sick person is not healed immediately: a lack of faith. The lack of faith may reside in the people praying for the sick person but it usually resides in the sick person himself.

Now it is true that the Scriptures do say that, at least in some cases, faith is necessary to receive healing. To two blind men, Jesus said, “According to your faith let it be to you” (Matt. 9:29). To the father with the epileptic son, Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23). Conversely, Jesus was unable to do

mighty works in Nazareth because of the people's unbelief (Matt. 13:58).

These Scriptures tell us that, at least in some cases, the lack of faith is the fault of the sick person. Many sick people take this to mean that they must somehow work up the faith needed to receive their healing and many of the preachers seem to encourage this. Unfortunately, this means that they are telling people that they are saved by grace but they are healed by works.

Bosworth and McCrossan are correct when they point out that the faith needed to receive healing is the same faith needed to receive salvation. In Luke 7, a woman who is a sinner comes to Jesus and washes his feet with her tears and anoints his feet with oil. To her he says, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (v. 50). Then, in Luke 8, a woman who had an issue of blood for eighteen years comes to Jesus and touches his robe. To her he says, "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace" (v. 48). At least, that is how the verse is usually translated. McCrossan correctly points out that in the Greek, Jesus says to her *exactly* what he said to the first woman: "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." The faith that delivered the first woman from her sins is the same faith that delivered the second woman from her sickness. So where does the faith to be saved come from?

Those in the healing movement say that the faith for both salvation and healing come from the Word of God because "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). But the writer of Hebrews, while referring to the Israelites who journeyed with Moses through the wilderness, says, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us

as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Heb. 4:2). So hearing the word of God *alone* does not necessarily produce faith. Some other factor must be involved.

Eph. 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." What is the gift of God? His grace? Certainly. Salvation? Certainly. But it is also the faith to receive that salvation. Moreover, that faith is "not of yourselves." It is not something that we work up, otherwise salvation would come by works. The faith to be saved does not come from us or from our efforts: it comes from God the Father. All we need to do is receive it.

Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The Greek literally says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." The faith that helped Paul to live out his life was actually the faith of Jesus, who had given him this faith. After all, Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). So faith comes from Jesus, the Son of God.

And faith is listed among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). So faith comes from the Holy Spirit.

The faith to be saved comes from God alone. Since the faith to be saved is the same faith needed to be healed, then the faith to be healed must also come from God and not from ourselves. That is why the father of the epileptic boy got it right when he said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark

9:24). He knew that his faith was not perfect but he also knew who could make it perfect.

To his credit, Bosworth acknowledges that God is the source of the faith that is needed to be healed.

It is by filling us with His own Life that God Himself becomes our life, our peace, our righteousness, our purity, our strength and our health. He becomes the Preserver of "our whole spirit, soul and body," our zeal, our joy, *our faith* (p. 161, italics mine).

He reminds his readers that they can always count on the Holy Spirit to help them with their unbelief.

In Mark 9:24 we read that the father seeking healing for his child, "cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." By asking Christ to help him, he received the needed help. He rose to a place of power above the apostles and succeeded where they had failed. In the Greek the Holy Spirit is called the *Paraklete*, which means "helper." Thank God! The Christian can always have His help whenever it is needed. The Holy Spirit is always ready to work in us "that which is well-pleasing in His sight." In a special sense this includes *faith*. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Since faith is especially pleasing in His sight, He wants to produce it in our hearts by His Word and by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is always ready to help every Christian to exercise faith for any blessing God has promised them in His Word. The Bible tells us

that Christ is able to save us to the uttermost. This includes particularly His saving us from our unbelief. This is the sin of which the Holy Spirit came to convict us. Therefore, with a resolute purpose hearken only to His Word. Confess to God your unbelief and count on Him for deliverance from it, the same as from any other sin. His grace is always sufficient to cause faith to triumph for the appropriation of any mercy He has provided. The Holy Spirit is always ready to execute for us the fulfillment of any promise God has given (pp. 132-133, italics his).

The sick person, therefore, does not need to rely on himself or herself to work up the faith needed to be healed. He or she can rely on God to supply that faith.

However, God will impart that faith whenever he is ready to heal. That is, he will impart that faith according to his will. If God does not impart faith to a sick person, then he must want that person to remain sick for a reason. The question is again: which reason?

The Cause of Sickness: Satan

Bosworth and McCrossan would find my last statement to be absurd. Since God is good and God is love, he would never want a sick person, especially one of his own children, to remain sick. And since he is good and he is love, he would never have a reason to make that person sick to begin with. Only Satan causes people to get sick, so only Satan would have a reason to want that person to remain sick.

McCrossan says "all sickness is caused by Satan. That is the only explanation" (p. 2). He quotes Rom. 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Who caused that man to sin? Satan. So, "Satan, and not God, is the real author of sin, sickness, and death" (p. 1).

The Book of Job would seem to support this conclusion: "So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7).

Jesus made some statements that would also support this conclusion. For example, concerning the woman who had been bent over for eighteen years, Jesus said that she had been bound by Satan for those eighteen years (Luke 13:16). Jesus often healed people by casting an evil spirit out of them. The woman whom Satan had bound for eighteen years had a spirit of infirmity and Jesus equated that spirit with Satan. So the evil spirits work for Satan.

Virtually every teacher who teaches that it is God's will to heal everyone now, including McCrossan and Bosworth, point to Acts 10:38 as proof that every sickness is caused by Satan: Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." However, when they argue that this proves that all sickness is caused by the devil, they are committing a logical fallacy, for this verse does not *necessarily* prove that all sickness is caused by Satan. This verse is not saying that every person that Jesus healed had been oppressed by the devil. It is saying that every person who had been oppressed by the devil was healed by Jesus. If I were to say, "The Ford Motor Company manufactured all the cars

known as the Mustang," I am not saying that every car the Ford Motor Company made was a Mustang; I am saying that every Mustang was manufactured by the Ford Motor Company. In Acts 10:38, we have two groups of people, those who had been healed by Jesus and those who had been oppressed by the devil. Acts 10:38 may be saying that everyone in the first group was also in the second group, meaning that everyone that Jesus healed had been oppressed by the devil, but it may also mean that the second group was a sub-group of the first group, meaning that Jesus healed all those who had been oppressed by the devil *and then some*. If Acts 10:38 had read, Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who had epilepsy," we would have two groups of people: those who had been healed by Jesus and those who had had epilepsy. The statement may mean that everyone Jesus healed had had epilepsy or it may mean that Jesus healed everyone who had epilepsy *and then some*. We know from the Scriptures that the second meaning is true, for Jesus also healed those who were blind or lame or mute or feverish, etc. Jesus did not heal just epileptics. He healed them and others as well.

So Acts 10:38 leaves us with two possibilities. It could mean that everyone Jesus healed had been oppressed by the devil or it could mean that Jesus healed everyone who had been oppressed by the devil *and then some*. We know from the Scriptures that the second meaning is true, for Jesus also healed people who were *not* oppressed by the devil.

One of the better examples of this is the man who had been born blind (John 9). The disciples encountered this man and asked Jesus who had sinned to cause this blindness.

Jesus' answer was, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:3). The person who asked me to read these two books correctly pointed out that the Greek uses no punctuation, so the exact meaning of Jesus' statement depends on how we punctuate it. He suggested that we punctuate it differently so that it reads, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned. But that the works of God should be revealed in him, I must work the works of Him who sent Me...." Since we have two possibilities here, we must ask a question: What did John mean when he wrote it? We cannot ask John himself, but we can ask someone who was close to him. Irenaeus was the bishop of Lyons in what is now France during the second century AD. He lived only two generations after John. In his youth, he would often hear the bishop of Smyrna, a man named Polycarp, preach. Polycarp was a disciple of John. So Irenaeus would know better than we would what John meant. Here is what he said about John 9:3:

And for this reason did the Lord most plainly manifest Himself and the Father to His disciples, lest, forsooth, they might seek after another God besides Him who formed man, and who gave him the breath of life; and that men might not rise to such a pitch of madness as to feign another Father above the Creator. And thus also He healed by a word all the others who were in a weakly condition because of sin; to whom also He said, "Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee:" pointing out by this, that, because of the sin of disobedience, infirmities

have come upon men. To that man, however, who had been blind from his birth, He gave sight, not by means of a word, but by an outward action; doing this not without a purpose, or because it so happened, but that He might show forth the hand of God, that which at the beginning had moulded man. And therefore, when His disciples asked Him for what cause the man had been born blind, whether for his own or his parents' fault, He replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Now the work of God is the fashioning of man. For, as the Scripture says, He made [man] by a kind of process: "And the Lord took clay from the earth, and formed man." Wherefore also the Lord spat on the ground and made clay, and smeared it upon the eyes, pointing out the original fashioning [of man], how it was effected, and manifesting the hand of God to those who can understand by what [hand] man was formed out of the dust. For that which the artificer, the Word, had omitted to form in the womb, [viz., the blind man's eyes], He then supplied in public, that the works of God might be manifested in him, in order that we might not be seeking out another hand by which man was fashioned, nor another Father; knowing that this hand of God which formed us at the beginning, and which does form us in the womb, has in the last times sought us out who were lost, winning back His own, and taking up the lost sheep upon His shoulders, and with joy restoring it to the fold of life. (Irenaeus,

Against Heresies, Book V, chapter XV, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.vii.xvi.html>).

Not only does Irenaeus punctuate this verse the way that it is usually punctuated (which is contrary to the suggestion given above), he also has no problem with saying that the Word, Jesus, who always did the will of his Father, deliberately “omitted to form in the womb” the man’s eyes in their entirety, choosing instead to finish them later in public where others can see him do so, in order that “the works of God should be revealed in him.” The man had been born blind not because he had been oppressed by the devil but because Jesus and his Father chose to make him blind.

The Bible teaches us, therefore, that only *some* sicknesses come from Satan. Furthermore, the Book of Job tells us that even if Satan does bring sickness upon a person, he is merely the instrument God is using to bring that sickness upon that person. The author of the Book of Job clearly places the responsibility for Job’s afflictions on God’s shoulders. When Satan appears in the throne room in heaven, it is God, not Satan, who brings up the subject of Job. God tells Satan what he can and cannot do to Job, meaning that if God had simply said, “No,” to Satan’s challenges, Satan could not have done anything to Job. God does more than just give his permission to Satan to afflict Job: he *authorizes* him to afflict Job. Because we are an independent minded culture, we do not fully understand how authority works. Solomon never touched a tool or a stone during the building of the First Temple, yet he takes the credit for building it (1 Kings 8:20, 27) because he *authorized* its building. Even though thousands of other people

did the actual work, the Scriptures say that he built the temple (1 Kings 6:1-38) because they were acting under his authority, on his behalf. Satan afflicts Job, but he is acting under God's authority, on God's behalf, which means that God is ultimately responsible for the afflictions. And the author point blank says so. Near the end of the book, he says that Job's relatives "comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him" (Job 42:11). And God himself takes responsibility for afflicting Job. When Satan appears the second time, the Lord says to him, "And still he (Job) holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3).

Admittedly, I have not read everything written by those who teach that it is God's will to heal everyone now, but I find it interesting that McCrossan and Bosworth and all the others whom I have read have all ignored John 9 and the Book of Job, the two passages which prove that not everyone is made sick by Satan alone. Sometimes they are made sick by God himself.

The Cause of Sickness: Sin

Job's friends offered another reason why people get sick. They believed that all calamities, including sickness, are caused by sin. Some people believe the same thing even today.

Again, Jesus made some statements that support this conclusion. For example, to the man he had cured by the pool at Bethesda, he said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you" (John 5:14).

However, those who would say that all sickness is caused by sin and/or the lack of faith are ignoring what the rest of the Scriptures have to say. Timothy suffered from “frequent infirmities” (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul did not believe that Timothy’s sicknesses were caused by a lack of faith, otherwise he would have told him to return to believing the Scriptures. Paul did not believe that Timothy’s sicknesses were caused by Satan, otherwise he would have told him to “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Paul did not believe that Timothy’s sicknesses were caused by sin, otherwise he would have told him to repent. Instead, Paul said, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine,” meaning that he believed that Timothy’s sicknesses were caused by purely natural means. The Greek here literally says, “No longer be a water-drinker.” The word for water-drinker, *hudropoteo*, is used in the Bible only here, so it is difficult to fully understand its meaning based on its usage in the Scriptures only. However, from its usage by the Greek writers of the time, we learn that it was a technical term which meant “a person who drank water only because he abstained from drinking wine.” Thus, the Greek historian, Herodotus, says of the Persians, “They do not indulge in wine, but are water-drinkers” (Vincent’s *Word Studies in the New Testament*, p. 1045). It was common practice at that time to mix water with their wine to reduce the chance of drunkenness. But they also mixed wine with their water because of the quality of the water in that area. As Libanius, a Greek philosopher, pointed out, “Our stomachs are weakened by water-drinking” (*hudropoteo*). So Timothy’s frequent infirmities and stomach problems came about because he had become a “water-

drinker," a person who abstained from drinking wine. That is why Paul urged him to use a little wine with his water. His sicknesses were not caused by Satan, sin or the lack of faith. They were caused by purely natural means and were cured by purely natural means. (See www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/-clarke/ti1005.htm for more information.)

Epaphroditus was another disciple who became sick (Phil. 2:25-30). Paul said that he almost died but God spared him so that he, Paul, would not "have sorrow upon sorrow," which means that Paul thought that Epaphroditus' death was a real possibility. So where was his faith? Paul says that we should "hold such men in esteem," which means that Epaphroditus' sickness was not caused by sin or a lack of faith. In fact, Epaphroditus was doing the opposite of that when he became sick. He was so busy doing "the work of Christ" that he ceased "regarding his life." Not all sickness is caused by sin. Some believers get sick even though they are *not* sinning.

Those who teach that all sickness is caused by sin often treat it as if it were a purely mechanical process, that sickness is merely the natural consequence of sinning, just as getting burned is the natural consequence of touching a hot stove. They see the covenant as protecting us from the sickness all around us as long as we remain under the covenant, even as an umbrella protects us from the rain as long as we remain under the umbrella. If we were to step out from under the covenant into the realm of sickness by sinning, we would naturally get sick even as we would naturally get wet if we were to step out from under the umbrella into the rain. God did not make us sick any more than he made us wet. He just

sat back and watched the natural (and spiritual) forces do their work. Sickness is just the natural consequence of sinning.

Now, the Scriptures do teach that sin does cause natural consequences: "Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood. He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown" (Ps. 7:14-16). However, those who teach that sickness is merely a natural consequence of sin are once again oversimplifying things.

Bosworth (p. 41) and McCrossan (p. 32) are correct in pointing out that the curses in Deut. 28 include every form of sickness, and since the curses would come upon the Israelites only "if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God," that is, only if they sinned, then this chapter would seem to support the view that all sickness is caused by sin. Some would also argue that since curses are bad, they would never be placed upon people by a good God. That is a reasonable conclusion based on human reasoning, but what do the Scriptures actually say?

The Lord will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever.... The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart.

And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness.... The Lord will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.... The Lord will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses (*kholee*, the word used in Is. 53:4). Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness (*kholee*) and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the Lord bring upon you until you are destroyed (Deut. 28:21-22, 27-29, 35, 59-61).

Yes, Deut. 28 teaches that all sicknesses, whether they are written in this Book of the Law or not, are curses. It also teaches that they are NOT just the “natural consequences” of sin. It teaches that God will NOT just sit back and watch the natural (and spiritual) forces do their work. It teaches that GOD HIMSELF will actively afflict EVERY FORM of sickness upon the Israelites, from which they CANNOT be healed, if they sin.

Moreover, it teaches that God will ENJOY afflicting them with sickness. We like it when the Word says things like, “The Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you,” because that lines up with our idea of a God who is love and a God who is good. But we dislike it when the Word says, “The Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing,” because that does not line up with our idea of a God

who is love and a God who is good. But the Word does say both things: "And it shall be, that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing" (Deut. 28:63). In other words, the joy that God received while doing good to his obedient children is the SAME joy he will receive while destroying those very children for disobeying him. If that does not line up with our idea of a God who is love and a God who is good, then our definitions of "love" and "good" are too narrow.

Perhaps we can reconcile our image of a good God with the image of a God who brings curses upon the Israelites by saying that at least the Israelites deserved to be afflicted by God with sickness. After all, they did *sin*. But the man who was born blind was afflicted even though he had not sinned. When the disciples encountered this man, they asked Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." Instead, he was made blind so "that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:2-3). God caused him to be blind even though he had not sinned.

And then there is Job. His friends thought that his calamities and sickness had come upon him because he had sinned. But the author of the Book of Job makes it abundantly clear that Job's calamities and sickness were not caused by sin because the author (Job 1:1) and even the Lord himself (Job 1:8, 2:3) state that Job was a blameless man. Job had not sinned, yet God made him sick anyway.

Not everyone is made sick by sin. Sometimes they are made sick by God himself.

Which leads us to the third cause of sickness.

The Cause of Sickness: God

Job offered a third reason for why people get sick. He correctly argued that his calamities and sickness were brought upon him by God himself. However, he incorrectly argued that God did so for all the wrong motives. He started with the same premise that his friends started with, that a God who is love and a God who is good would never afflict a righteous person. But Job was afflicted. His friends concluded that this was proof that Job must have sinned. Job, however, knew he had not sinned, so he concluded that his affliction was proof that God is not love and God is not good after all.

What Job and his friends failed to see is that God's motive for doing anything is always good. Joseph realized this, even during his afflictions. After his father died, his brothers thought that he would seek revenge on them for selling him into slavery. However, "Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive'" (Gen. 50:20). God's motive for doing anything is to save people, sometimes physically, ultimately spiritually, to bring them into a relationship with him so they can live forever with him. God wanted Joseph in Egypt so he could save many people, including his own family, from starvation and he used his brothers to get him there. His brothers did what they did for evil reasons but God did the very same thing through them for good reasons. God made Joseph endure his afflictions because they ultimately benefited *other people*. Satan afflicted Job and

will be condemned for doing so because his motive was evil: he wanted to kill, steal and destroy. God also afflicted Job but will not be condemned for doing so because God intended it for good. Ultimately, as we shall see, Job's afflictions benefited *other people*.

So why does God afflict people with sickness or any other calamity? He has at least four reasons for doing so and three of those reasons are discussed by Elihu in the Book of Job. First, as we have already seen, God afflicts people with sickness to destroy them because of their sins. Deut. 28 is not the only passage that tells us this. Through Jeremiah, God tells the Jews repeatedly that he will essentially fulfill Deut. 28 if they continue in their wicked ways.

Then the Lord said to me, "Do not pray for this people, for their good. When they fast I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence" (Jer. 14:11-12).

"I Myself shall fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger and fury and great wrath. I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they shall die of a great pestilence" (Jer. 21:5-6).

"And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from

the land that I gave them and their fathers" (Jer. 24:10; see also 29:15-19; 34:17).

God also warns the Jews through Ezekiel:

"Therefore, as I live," says the Lord God, "surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. One-third of you shall die of the pestilence..." (Ezek. 5:11-12; see also 6:11-12; 7:5-15; 12:16; 14:19-21; 33:23-27).

Because the Jews continued in their wicked ways, the prophecies were fulfilled. God through Jeremiah says to the Jews who fled to Egypt after Jerusalem had been destroyed, "For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence" (Jer. 44:13).

Through the prophet Micah, God tells the Israelites, "Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins" (Micah 6:13). And he will do this "that I may make you a desolation" (Micah 6:16), meaning that he will make them sick so he can destroy them.

Jehoram was a wicked king in Judah. Because of his wickedness, "the Lord struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease (*kholee*, the same word used in Is. 53:4). Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his sickness

(*kholee*); so he died in severe pain (the same Hebrew word that is translated *diseases* in Ps. 103:3)" (2 Chron. 21:18-19).

And this is not something that God did only in the Old Testament. McCrossan and Bosworth point out (correctly) that God is an unchanging God. If he healed in Old Testament times and in New Testament times, then he still heals today. By the same token, if he afflicted sinners with sickness in Old Testament times and in New Testament times, he still afflicts sinners with sickness today.

The Book of Acts tells us that God afflicted sinners with sickness in New Testament times. Consider what happened to Herod: "Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23). And what was God's intended good in this case? "But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). Look also at what God did to Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas, when he tried to keep the proconsul of Paphos from believing the gospel that was being preached to him by Paul: "'And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand." And what was God's intended good this time? "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord" (Acts 13:11-12). Some people become believers when they see God make a blind man see; this man became a believer when he saw God make a seeing man blind.

So the Book of Acts tells us that God afflicted sinners with sickness in New Testament times. And the Book of Revelation tells us that God will afflict sinners with sickness in

the future. Some preachers say, "There is no sickness, disease or infirmity in Heaven to give." According to Revelation, there is. They reside in the "seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God" (Rev. 15:7). When the first angel poured out his bowl, "a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image" (Rev. 16:2). When the fifth angel poured out his bowl, "they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds" (Rev. 16:11).

Why does God do this? What good can possibly come out of destroying people for their sins? In the Book of Job, Elihu acknowledges that God destroys sinners:

There is no darkness nor shadow of death
Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.
For He need not further consider a man,
That he should go before God for judgment.
He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry,
And sets others in their place.
Therefore He knows their works;
He overthrows them in the night
And they are crushed (Job 34:22-25).

God does this because

...they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him;
For He hears the cry of the afflicted (Job 34:27).

God destroys the wicked so that he can deliver the poor and the afflicted. Furthermore, he does this so "that the hypocrite

should not reign, lest the people be ensnared" (Job 34:30). God destroys the wicked so that others can remain free. Obviously, destroying the wicked does not benefit the one being destroyed, but God does it anyway because doing so benefits *other people*.

Second, God afflicts people with sickness to chasten them. To be fair to Job's friends, this is the position they took: "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17). They did not see sickness as just the "natural consequence" of sin. They thought that calamities, including sickness, came upon people because God was chastening them for their sins. Their mistake came in assuming that this truth applied to every calamity and sickness, including Job's. What they did get right was that God's goal for chastening people is to lead them to repentance.

Lev. 26 is structured much like Deut. 28. Even though he does not use the word "blessing," God tells the Israelites about all the good things that will happen to them if they obey him. And even though he does not use the word "curse," he then tells them about all the terrible things that will happen to them if they disobey him. Included in the terrible things are "I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart" (v. 16), and "I will send pestilence among you" (v. 25). However, unlike Deut. 28, the purpose of these terrible things is not to destroy them but to chastise them (v. 28). At the end of the chapter, God says,

But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, ...if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember (vv. 40-42).

God's goal in bringing about these terrible things is to bring them to repentance. Of course, if they refuse to repent, then Deut. 28 will take effect: these terrible things will destroy them.

God tells Solomon the same thing after Solomon had dedicated the new temple.

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or *send pestilence* among My people, if My people will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.... But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them..." (2 Chron. 7:12-14, 19-20, italics mine).

When God chastised his people by sending, among other things, pestilence among them, the people could either repent by turning away from their wicked ways or they could rebel by turning away from God himself. The choice was theirs.

Of course, the people did not always repent. Through the prophet Amos, God told the Kingdom of Israel that when they sinned, he sent them a famine, then drought, then blight and mildew. Each time, the people's choice was the same: "Yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord." Then, "I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt." The Hebrew word translated here as "plague" is the Hebrew word for "pestilence." He even overthrew some of their cities as he had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah. Still, the people's choice was the same: they refused to repent. That is why God says to them, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (Amos 4:6-12).

Sometimes God afflicts someone with sickness to chasten *someone else*. David was a man after God's own heart, yet he committed adultery with Bathsheba, got her pregnant, then murdered her husband to cover it all up. God, however, was not fooled and he sent Nathan the prophet to declare David's punishment. "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die." And that is what happened: "And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill." The child endured his sickness for seven days before he died (2 Sam. 12:13-18). God made the child sick not because the child needed chastening but because *David* did.

Sometime during his reign, David decided to count all the fighting men in his kingdom. The writer of Chronicles tells us David did so because "Satan stood up against Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1). However, the writer of Samuel says that David did so because "the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel" (2 Sam. 24:1). Here is another example of the Lord using Satan as a tool to accomplish what he wanted. After the men have been counted, the Lord sends Gad the prophet to David to tell him that he must choose one of three punishments "that *I* may do it to you." The punishment will be inflicted, not by Satan, but by the Lord himself. David makes his choice, "so the Lord sent a plague upon Israel." Again, the Hebrew word translated here as "plague" is the Hebrew word for "pestilence." Seventy thousand men die because of this pestilence. Once again, God afflicted people with sickness and killed them because "the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel" and because David needed chastening (2 Sam. 24:1-15).

The person who asked me to read these two books wrote, "Notice How God Chastens throughout the N.T. He Chastens with His Word, that Corrects, Exhorts, etc. never does it say He chastens with Sickness or disease." This only shows how inconsistent his doctrine is. Since God is an unchanging God, since he is the same yesterday, today and forever, as he and McCrossan and Bosworth keep pointing out, and since he chastened his people with sickness in the O.T., then surely he chastened his people with sickness in the N.T. Amazingly, F.F. Bosworth agrees. He asks, "Does not God sometimes chasten His people through sickness?" And his answer is, "Decidedly yes!" (p. 70). He then cites 1 Cor.

11:31-32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." Paul tells the Corinthians that the Lord chastens us so that we will not be condemned with the world. Why did he bring this up? Because he just got done telling the Corinthians that "many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep," that is, many have already died, because they had failed to discern the Lord's body during their communion celebrations. Clearly, Paul is telling the Corinthians that the Lord is chastening them with sickness and death because of their sin.

Paul also tells the Corinthians the good that will come from their chastening. He tells them that God chastens us so that we will not be condemned with the world. God does not want us to be eternally condemned; he wants us to live eternally with him. Elihu says,

Man is also chastened with pain (as McCrossan points
out on page 11, the Hebrew word here is *makob*,
the same word used in Is. 53:4) on his bed,
And with strong pain in many of his bones,
So that his life abhors bread,
And his soul succulent food.
His flesh wastes away from sight,
And his bones stick out which once were not seen.
Yes, his soul draws near the Pit,
And his life to the executioners (Job 33:19-22).

God chastens man with pain in order to provoke a response:

For has anyone said to God,
"I have borne chastening;
I will offend no more;
Teach me what I do not see;
If I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34:31-32).

Then he looks at men and says,
"I have sinned, and perverted what was right,
And it did not profit me" (Job 33:27).

Why does God do this?

Behold, God works all these things,
Twice, in fact, three times with a man,
To bring back his soul from the Pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of life (Job 33:29-30).

God's purpose in chastening people is to bring forth eternal life in them.

This is why chastening is actually proof that he loves us:

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor detest His correction;
For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son in whom he delights (Prov. 3:11-12).

The writer of Hebrews quotes this passage and reminds us that God chastens us so “that we may be partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12:5-10). God loves us so much that he uses chastening to change our sinfulness into holiness so that we can live eternally with him.

“Who Teaches Like Him?”

Third, God afflicts people with sickness to teach them something new. Many of those who believe that it is God’s will to heal everyone now hate this reason. John Bevere, in his *Extraordinary* video series, says the idea that God uses sickness to teach people is just an excuse for our lack of faith. Bill Johnson, in his book, *When Heaven Invades Earth* (p. 58), says that if God uses sickness to teach his children, then he is a child abuser. What, then, does that make God when he caused two of his children, Ananias and Sapphira, to drop dead (Acts 5:1-11)?

Bosworth does not specifically address this reason, although I suspect that if he were ever asked for his opinion, he would reject it because he does not believe that God afflicts people at all. Yet, in his book, he gives some indication that he would accept it. He says that in some cases healing is not immediately manifested because God is using the sickness to teach us something:

If, after coming to God for healing, He finds you more encouraged by your improvement than by His Word, He may find it necessary to test your faith. This is to *teach* you the glorious lesson of believing His Word,

when every sense contradicts Him (p. 119, italics mine).

He says that God sometimes chastens his people through sickness because he wants to teach us something: "When we see the cause of the chastening, and turn from it, God promises it shall be withdrawn. As soon as 'we judge ourselves,' or *learn our lesson*, the absolute promise is 'we shall not be judged'" (p. 70, italics mine). He lists 22 reasons why people do not receive healing. In other words, to receive healing, some people must first *learn* why they have not received it and then correct it. He even says, "A delay in receiving healing for instance is, in one sense, good news" (p. 160). And why is that? Because it gives us the opportunity to learn about and acquire the "Life of God."

Some people reject this reason because they say it cannot be found in the Scriptures. Yet Elihu tells us plainly that God uses all sorts of afflictions, including sickness, to teach his people.

He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous;
But they are on the throne with kings,
For He has seated them forever,
And they are exalted.
And if they are bound in fetters,
Held in the cords of affliction,
Then He tells them their work and their
transgressions—
That they have acted defiantly.
He also opens their ear to *instruction* (literally,

chastisement, the same word used in Is. 53:5)
And commands that they turn from iniquity.
If they obey and serve Him,
They shall spend their days in prosperity,
And their years in pleasures.
But if they do not obey,
They shall perish by the sword,
And they shall die without knowledge (Job 36:7-12,
italics mine).

He says that God sends afflictions to provoke a response from us, and that response should be, "Teach me what I do not see" (Job 34:32).

Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out;
They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty.
But no one says, "Where is God my Maker,
Who gives songs in the night,
Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth,
And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?" (Job
35:9-11, italics mine).

When afflictions, including sicknesses, come upon us, our response should not be to seek an immediate release from them or to run from God because of them. Instead, God wants us to come to him and say, "Teach me what I need to learn from this." And why does God want to teach us?

In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falls upon men,

While slumbering on their beds,
Then He opens the ears of men,
And seals their instruction.
In order to turn man from his deed,
And conceal pride from man,
He keeps back his soul from the Pit,
And his life from perishing by the sword (Job 33:15-18).

God wants to teach us because he does not want us to perish. He wants us to live forever with him. So his reason for teaching us is the same as his reason for chastening us:

Behold, God works all these things,
Twice, in fact, three times with a man,
To bring back his soul from the Pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of life (Job 33:29-30).

God is so wonderful and so wise that he can take even sickness and use it to bring forth life. No wonder Elihu stands back in amazement and exclaims:

Behold, God is exalted by His power;
Who teaches like Him?
Who has assigned Him His way,
Or who has said, "You have done wrong"? (Job 36:22-23).

God used Job's sickness to teach him something new about himself—and Himself. More than that, God used his sickness to teach *other people* as well. How? He made Job's story a part of his Word. Millions of people have read Job's story. Only God knows how many people have received comfort and the strength to endure their afflictions while reading about the afflictions of Job and what he had learned through them. God afflicted Job with sickness because he knew it would benefit *other people*. What Satan had intended for evil, God used for good.

Fourth—and this is the consummate reason, the reason why God does everything—God afflicts people with sickness to glorify himself. Bosworth strongly objects to this reason.

If the modern theology of those who teach that God wants some of His worshipers to remain sick for His glory is true, then Jesus, during His earthly ministry, never hesitated to rob the Father of all the glory He could by healing *all* who came to Him. The Holy Spirit, likewise, robbed Him of all the glory He could by healing all the sick in the streets of Jerusalem. And Paul, too, robbed God of all the glory he could by healing *all* the sick on the island of Melita (p. 69, italics his).

But this teaching comes from Jesus himself. In John 11 (another passage that Bosworth and the others who defend his doctrine tend to ignore), Jesus, referring to Lazarus' sickness, says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it"

(v. 4). Perhaps Bosworth objects to this reason so strongly because those of us who have defended this reason have overstated our case. Jesus was looking at the result of this sickness. He said it would not result in death (that is, permanent physical death or eternal death) but would result in glorifying God. In other words, the sickness itself would not glorify God, but what God would accomplish through this sickness would glorify him.

What does it mean to "glorify God"? To glorify God means to ascribe glory to God or to acknowledge the glory of God. What, then, is the glory of God? When Moses was on Mount Sinai, he said to God, "Please, show me Your glory." God responded by saying, "I will make all My goodness pass before you" (Exod. 33:18-19). In other words, the glory of God is the goodness of God. So what Jesus was saying is that God would use Lazarus' sickness to show just how good he really is.

This, of course, is contrary to what Bosworth and the others teach. They teach that a good God would never afflict his children with sickness. Anne White of Victorious Ministry Through Christ International writes,

Could we ever conceive of God looking through a list of suitable diseases to ascertain which would be fixed on one of his so-called beloved children? No earthly father would deliberately will his son to be an imbecile or to be tortured by epilepsy or cancer. How can anyone ever attribute such a sinister will to our heavenly Father? In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is recorded as having said: "If you then, as bad as you are, know how

to give your children what is good for them, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him!" [7:11] (www.vmtc-international.org/writing/is-sickness-the-will-of-god/).

In other words, if we who are evil would never afflict our children with sickness, then surely God, who is perfect and loves us perfectly, would never afflict his children with sickness. But that conclusion is based on human reasoning and contradicts what the Word actually says.

White is partially right: I love my son so much that I would never afflict him with sickness for any reason. But then again, I love him so much that I would never command him to *die* a horrible death on a cross so that my enemies could *live*. And if he ever did become sick and I had the power to heal him immediately, I love him so much that I would not make him wait a few more days before healing him, and I certainly would not wait until he *died* before healing him. Yet this is precisely what we find in John 11.

When Jesus received word that Lazarus was sick, he did not immediately rush off to heal him. Nor did he simply speak a word right then and there to heal Lazarus. Instead, *he made Lazarus wait*. Jesus deliberately waited two more days, meaning that he deliberately made Lazarus endure his sickness for a few more days. Furthermore, *he waited until Lazarus died*. And he did this precisely because he *loved* Lazarus:

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two

more days in the place where He was (vv. 5-6, italics mine).

Jesus did exactly the opposite of what human reasoning says he should have done. As Bosworth and McCrossan keep pointing out, Jesus always did the will of his Father. So, the will of the Father in this case was to make his child Lazarus endure sickness and death so that he could be glorified.

Why? Why would a good God make his child endure sickness when he could have healed him immediately? Well, what happens at the end of the story? When Lazarus was sick, only Mary and Martha were with him. But because he died, Mary's house filled up with mourners. Jesus then raised Lazarus from the dead in front of all these witnesses. What was the result? "Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him" (v. 45). Why was it necessary for them to believe in him? People must believe in him so that they can have eternal life. God loved these people so much that he made Lazarus endure sickness and death so that *other people* could obtain eternal life. That is how God used his sickness to show how good he really is.

This is not the only time God used someone's sickness and death to bring eternal life to someone else. "At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas.... But it happened in those days that she became sick and died." The disciples send for Peter, who raises her from the dead. And what was the result? "And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord" (Acts 9:36-42).

Dr. Charles S. Price, who had a powerful healing ministry in the 1930s and 1940s, tells the story of a man who became saved through the sickness of his daughter.

Some time ago a lady brought to me a little girl who was sick. She was a sweet little tot, pretty as a picture, quiet and retiring; but a serious malady had fastened itself upon her little body. The father of the little girl, though he loved her dearly, was rebellious against the Lord. For years his wife had prayed for him to surrender, but he had always offered some excuse. We prayed together. Three times that little one was brought for prayer. Had there been *faith*, she would have been healed. But she was not! The mother went to prayer! Later she called me on the telephone and said, "Dr. Price, I feel that God is dealing with my husband. He loves our little girl so much that I think the Lord can reach his heart through her. Would it not be wonderful if I could get him to come with us when you pray once again? Perhaps, if we could get him on his knees to pray for her, it would not be long before he would be praying for himself."

The next time they came to the house for prayer, he came along. He was courteous, kind, and solicitous about his little girl; but when I asked him to pray, he said, "No, I don't want to be a hypocrite." The Holy Spirit led me to admonish him: "Brother, get on your knees, and let us look to the Lord together. If you do, I believe you will take a little girl home who has been healed by the touch of the Savior's hand." He

looked at me in amazement, and said, "Do you really believe that?" I told him I did. Down on his knees went that man! There sweetly stole over the body of the little girl the healing virtue of Jesus; and she raised her expressive eyes to God in a prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude. While the father was searching and yielding his heart, the Savior spoke to him those words which to an unregenerate heart bring peace. Suppose I had possessed faith enough and could have used it at will. Would that have brought as much glory to the name of the Lord—to say nothing of the knowledge of sin forgiven to a heart-hungry father—as the *imparted* faith which was given at the time it was needed? (*The Real Faith*, p. 92, italics his).

Those who would say that all sickness comes from Satan or from sin are over-simplifying reality and are ignoring everything the Word has to say on this subject. Some sicknesses are caused by Satan, some by sin, and some by God himself, who has several reasons for causing people to be sick. Sometimes he uses sickness to destroy the wicked. Sometimes he uses sickness to chasten the sinner *or to chasten others*. And sometimes he uses sickness to teach the ignorant. He does all of this because it benefits people and glorifies himself. He does all of this because it shows us that he is a good God after all.

The reasons why he causes people to be sick are also the very reasons why he may want the sick to remain sick. To preach, therefore, that it is always God's will to heal all is to go against what the Scriptures tell us. If he is using that sickness

to destroy the sick person for his or her wickedness or he is using that sickness to chasten the sick person (and/or others) or he is using that sickness to teach something to that sick person (and/or others) or he is using that sickness to work something good (such as salvation) in others, then we can pray for healing or rebuke that sickness or declare that the person has been healed all we want. God will see to it that the person remains sick. God will not impart the faith needed to heal that person until HE is ready to heal that person.

God's Will and Healing

Since there are so many reasons why a person could be sick, how is one to know which reason applies to which person? For example, how is one to know whether he is sick because God is chastening him or because God is teaching him? The answer is simple: ask Him! As Elihu says,

For has anyone said to God,
"I have borne chastening;
I will offend no more;
Teach me what I do not see;
If I have done iniquity, I will do no more"? (Job 34:31-32).

Ask God to teach you what you do not see. If he is simply teaching you something new, he will show you what that is. If he is chastening you because of sin, he will show you what that sin is so you can stop doing it.

If it is God's will to heal only *some* now and *all* believers *eventually*, then how is the sick individual to know

whether God wants to heal him now? The answer is simple: ask Him!

If you have been given the gift of healing and a sick individual asks you to pray for their healing, how are you to know whether God wants to heal this individual now? The answer is simple: ask Him! Once you know that it is God's will to heal this person, you can pray in faith, knowing that God will answer your prayer immediately.

Bosworth objects to this.

If it is God's will to heal only some of those who need healing, then none have any basis for faith, until they shall have received a special revelation that they are among the favored ones.

Why does Bosworth poison the issue by referring to those who are healed as "the favored ones"? We know that Christ "gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). God called McCrossan to be a pastor and a teacher, Bosworth to be an evangelist and Paul to be an apostle. Does that mean that God favored Bosworth over McCrossan and favored Paul over both of them? Of course not. He is no respecter of persons, which means that he equipped each person and called each person not because he favored one over the other but because doing so fulfilled *His* purposes. He always does what he does to fulfill his purposes. That is why he heals some and not others. He does this not because he favors the ones he healed but because he is fulfilling his purposes.

Bosworth goes on:

If God's promises to heal are not for all, then no man can ascertain the will of God for himself from the Bible.

Why not? The Scriptures tell us that "God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). Has God called anyone to be all of these things? Or has God called *all* to be apostles? "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Cor. 12:29-30). Obviously not, for Ephesians tells us that Christ gave *some* to be apostles, *some* to be prophets, etc. To use Bosworth's argument, then, since God did not call *all* to be apostles, then no man can ascertain the will of God for himself concerning his calling. That's nonsense. Every man can ascertain the will of God for himself by asking Him.

Are we to understand from such teachers that we must close our Bibles and get our revelation directly from the Spirit before we can pray for the sick? Cannot the will of God in this matter be ascertained from the Scriptures? This would be virtually to teach that the whole of the divine activity on the line of healing would have to be governed by direct revelations from the Spirit instead of by the Scriptures (p. 190).

Why does Bosworth make it an "either/or" proposition? Why does it have to be determined by the Spirit OR the Scriptures? Why can it not be both? The Scriptures give us general

guidance, not specific guidance. The Scriptures tell us that Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc., but it does not tell us who has been called to what. I have yet to find Bosworth's name in the Scriptures, so how did he know that he had been called to be an evangelist? The Spirit revealed it to him. McCrossan's name is not in the Scriptures, either, so how did he know that he had been called to be a pastor? The Spirit revealed it to him. The Spirit can give us specific guidance, but that guidance always agrees with the Scriptures.

Bosworth admits that "Without a divine revelation I cannot tell a person the specific reason why his or her prayer for the fulfillment of a divine promise is delayed" (p. 160). That is because Bosworth lists 22 reasons why a healing might not be manifested yet and each of those reasons only apply to *some* people and not to *all* people. So Bosworth does not know which reason applies to which person—apart from a special revelation from the Spirit. If Bosworth is willing to rely on specific guidance from the Spirit when it comes to knowing why a person's healing has not yet manifested, why does he object to relying on the specific guidance of the Spirit when it comes to knowing whom God wants to heal and whom he does not?

Bosworth admits that some people will not be healed until the evil spirit which is causing the sickness is cast out. He says, "*Some* are not healed because their affliction is the work of an evil spirit that must be cast out.... Many times we have seen people instantly delivered when we rebuked the afflicting spirit" (p. 194, italics mine). Notice that he said *some*, not *all*. How did he know which sickness was caused by an evil spirit

and which was not? He must have received specific guidance from the Spirit.

Jesus relied on the specific guidance of the Spirit. The Scriptures foretold his coming, his ministry, his death and his resurrection, but it did not tell him what to preach, when to preach it or where to preach it. The Scriptures did not tell him, "Today, you must preach the Sermon on the Mount." They did not tell him, "Now you must be in Cana to turn the water into wine." They did not tell him, "Today you must be in Nain to raise the widow's son back to life." Jesus relied on the Spirit to guide him in the specifics. He relied on the Spirit to tell him what to say, when to say it and where to say it. He relied on the Spirit to tell him where to go. He relied on the Spirit to tell him when to heal someone instantly and when to wait two more days. And he relied on the Spirit to tell him how to heal each individual.

The four Gospels record five instances in which Jesus healed a blind man (or in two cases, two blind men), and in each instance what Jesus did and/or said to heal the person(s) was different. In the first instance (Matt. 9:27-31), Jesus healed two blind men by touching their eyes and saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." In the second instance (Matt. 12:22), the blind man was demon-possessed, so Jesus healed him, presumably by casting the demon out. Nothing was ever said about the man's faith. In the third instance (Matt. 20:30-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43), blind Bartimaeus begged for his healing. Matthew tells us there was also a second man. Jesus healed them by touching their eyes and saying, "Your faith has made you well." In the fourth instance (Mark 8:22-26), Jesus spit on the man's eyes

and laid hands on him. When the man still could not see clearly, he laid his hands on him again. Nothing was ever said about the man's faith. In the fifth instance (John 9:1-7), Jesus made clay by spitting on the ground, put the clay on the man's eyes, and then sent him to the pool called Sent to wash the clay off. The man's faith was never mentioned at all. In fact, the man never even asked to be healed. Jesus just took it upon himself to heal the man, which means that it is NOT always necessary to have faith to receive a healing.

The point is that Jesus did not put God in a box by expecting the Holy Spirit to heal the same way in every instance. By being open to the special guidance of the Spirit, he allowed God his Father to work according to the needs of the individuals and the needs of the circumstances. Peter, Paul, and the other disciples were also open to the special guidance of the Spirit. Sometimes they commanded people to be healed, sometimes they used handkerchiefs, and sometimes just letting Peter's shadow fall on people was sufficient to bring healing. They knew that there was no set formula, no set method that worked in every instance.

McCrossan would advocate a set method for healing. He is convinced that many more people would be healed if every Christian simply followed James 5:14-15. But if this is something that every Christian should do, surely Paul would have known to do it and would have taught Timothy to do so as well. Why, then, did Timothy suffer from "frequent infirmities"? And why did Paul not tell him to get the elders and have them pray for him? Two possibilities present themselves. Perhaps Paul had received specific guidance from the Spirit that this practice did not apply to Timothy's case. Or

perhaps Timothy had already done so. Either way, *James 5:14-15 did not work for him*. This passage says that the prayer of faith will save the sick, but for some reason God must have withheld the necessary faith from Timothy or the elders or both.

What did work for him was to take some medicine. Paul told Timothy to add a little wine to his water. Plato refers to wine as a medicine. Because the water weakened the stomachs of the people in that area, the wine was actually a form of preventative medicine. For Timothy, since he was already sick, the wine would be a medicine that would cure him, so this verse can be used to justify taking medication for our sicknesses. And how did Paul know to tell Timothy to add wine to his water? Perhaps Paul was using some common sense, for everyone in the area knew that drinking water alone causes stomach problems. Or perhaps Paul had received a special revelation from the Spirit.

Bosworth mentions Hezekiah's sickness (pp. 105-106). He points to Hezekiah as an example of healing that occurs gradually. However, that is not what the text says. The text implies that God would heal him on the third day. That is why Hezekiah says to Isaiah, "What is the sign that the Lord *will* heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day?" (2 Kings 20:8). Notice two things about this story. First of all, the fact that Hezekiah asked for a sign means that he had not prayed in faith or had the faith to believe God's prophetic word spoken to him through Isaiah, yet God healed him anyway. Second of all, notice how he was actually healed: "Then Isaiah said, 'Take a lump of figs.' So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered" (2 Kings 20:7). Isaiah did not

lay hands on him and pray for him; he did not anoint him with oil; he did not declare his healing. Instead, he used purely natural means. He used medicine. And how did he know to use medicine in this instance? He had received a special revelation from the Spirit.

All of these examples tell us that when healing the sick, we must be led by the Spirit to know not only if and how a person is to be healed, but also *when* a person is to be healed. Hezekiah had to wait three days. Lazarus had to wait two days and then had to die before being healed. God is much wiser than we are. He knows what is happening in the lives of those who are sick and in the lives of those who are around them. He knows why they are sick and what must be done before they are healed. And he knows which method and which timing are best for each situation. If we are unsure about what he wants us to do in a particular person's case, we need to do only one thing: ask Him!

Dr. Price tells another story which illustrates my main points so well.

It is the poor and the needy who have been given so many good things, and it is the rich whom he has sent empty away. A crippled man was brought to the meetings some years ago. Those who brought him told me he was a man possessed of all the faith in the world and one who was known in the community for his good life and works. He was a good-living man and, no doubt, loved his Lord; but he was to go away from more than one service because of the *one thing* that he

lacked, and which his Master was ultimately to reveal to his mind.

How the people prayed for that cripple! I can see him now, struggling to rise in answer to the entreaties of that people that he arise in faith and walk. Many times I knelt by the side of his chair and rebuked the power that bound him. The days went by and yet there was no sign of his healing—no acquiescence had come from the skies in response to prayer.

Price did not teach the man, as Bosworth would have, that he should go home and believe that he had been healed despite what his symptoms were telling him. He knew that if the man had truly believed, he would have been healed immediately. “To testify to healing on the basis of faith or promise, before it has happened, is generally unwise, and always inexcusable, unless the faith is actually there.... Genuine faith can no more manifest itself without result, than the sunshine without light and heat” (p. 27). Price, therefore, knew that God must have had a reason for withholding the necessary faith from this man.

One afternoon they wheeled him to a corner in the building. He asked the people to leave the two of us alone, and then said something that has lingered in the chambers of my memory.

“What a failure I am,” he declared. “I came here strong in what I thought was *my* faith in the Lord. As I look deeply into my heart I find something about which I wish to confess. What a poor, miserable failure

I have been. I have been spiritually proud of the fact that people have pointed to *me* as a man who suffered without complaining. They pointed me out as the man who never grumbled, although he had a cross to bear. I grew proud of my reputation and I can see now that what I termed my goodness has been self-righteousness in the sight of my Lord."

He put his face in his hands and wept. There was something so pathetic about that poor, crippled man that the tears welled up in my eyes too. I reached out my hands and put them on his head and commenced to pray. I prayed for his healing; and, as I prayed, he stopped me. "Dr. Price," he said, "I don't need healing half as much as I need Jesus. I am so hungry for His presence. More than anything else in my life, I want to know Him better, and I am content to spend my days in this chair if only He will flood this self-righteous heart of mine with His peace and love." So I watched the cripple in the wheel chair disappear around the corner of the building.

He went away quietly, and my heart went with him, as they wheeled him out of the building. All the way home my heart was singing for him the hymn:

*Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by!*

God had used the man's sickness to teach him something about himself.

A broken and a contrite heart will He not despise! How sweet it is to come to the end of self! How wonderful, after we have toiled all night and have caught nothing, that He condescends to wait for us on the shore! How gracious the voice that tells us to cast our nets on the *right* side of the boat, that our joy might be full! What determines which is the right side of a boat? Why, the way it is going, of course. You will soon find out where the right side is *if your boat is going toward Jesus*; and the boat must be *empty*, if you would *bring* the Nazarene on board.

A few days later I was leaving the building in company with Dr. Manchester, the man who buried President McKinley. At the door of the auditorium sat the man in his wheel chair, patiently waiting for the doors to open for the evening service. The afternoon meeting was over. Dr. Manchester looked at the face of the crippled man and stopped. Then he walked over to him and I followed. "Are you coming for prayer?" he asked.

"For prayer and to receive healing," was the reply. There was something different about the man. His voice—his tone—his eyes—such a look of reflected glory on his face. I knew something had happened. "Tell me," I said, "What has happened. My brother, I discern you have experienced something that is so wonderful I can feel its glory, though I do not know what it is."

Then he told me he had been with Jesus. He had spent the night in prayer—not in intercession

alone, but in praise and worship. He told me that at four in the morning a consciousness of the presence of the Lord had overwhelmed him. He knew Jesus was in his room in a special way. He told me how his voice in adoration had commenced to praise his Lord. He said that he then became conscious of an infusion of the Life Divine. Something passed from Jesus to him; and he felt as though a fog had rolled away from his heart and mind. From that moment on he knew that his struggles were over; and a sweet and holy peace was wrapped around his soul. He told us that now he *knew*, when once again he came to obey his Lord in the anointing with oil, strength would flow from Jesus, and life divine would be given him to restore him to health and strength.

God had imparted the faith necessary for his healing.

As I looked into Dr. Manchester's face, I noticed that tears stood in his eyes. Then he spoke, "Why does this man have to wait until tonight?"

"He does not," I replied. "The Great Physician is here now. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

A moment later it was over. Out of his wheel chair arose that man. He ran and jumped and praised the Lord for his deliverance. It was a miracle of power divine. Around him on the snowy street, men and women gathered first to praise, and then to pray. Unsaved hearts were broken, and many were the penitential tears that were shed! (pp.83-86).

God used this man's sickness not only to chasten him, to reveal to him his sin, and to lead him to repentance, he also used it to bring others to salvation, thereby glorifying himself by showing the world how good he really is.

Bosworth and McCrossan and those who agree with them see sickness only as an evil that must be eliminated as quickly as possible. God sees it as a tool which can be used to change lives. What Satan intended to use for evil, God can use for good. Let us not thwart his will or shipwreck the faith of some by insisting that he heal all of the sick on this earth in this lifetime. Let us surrender to his will and let God be God.

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