

From The Immediacy of Miracles: Toward a Better Understanding of the Elephant in the Room

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Chapter 7

Timothy's Tummy Troubles

It is very important to not form our doctrine based on the experiences of others or our own. We should let the word of God speak for itself. *Scripture* teaches that “by His wounds we were healed,” (1 Pet. 2:24) and that our God is the “Lord that Heals You” (Ex. 15:26). He lists as one of His many benefits the healing of all our diseases (Psa. 103:3). Furthermore, Jesus showed us the Father’s will concerning healing and other miracles by the examples He set while on earth. He was always willing. He turned no one away. He delayed no one’s healing. These are truths based on the word of God upon which we can place our trust.

Yet, we can learn from experience. It is now clear to me that my mother’s wrong decision resulting in her early and unnecessary death influenced my decision to save my life. However, that doesn’t mean we now invent a “doctrine” such as, “Sometimes God heals super-naturally, and sometimes He uses medical science.” Certainly, God can and does use medical science to bring healing. He is the One who gives knowledge to mankind. Without this knowledge, many would die prematurely. But Jesus did not tell those who came to Him for healing to go see their doctor—He healed them immediately. Nor did He condemn the woman with the issue of blood for having sought medical care and exhausting her financial resources. Even so, there are questions left unanswered that deserve a closer look.

“Lord, open our eyes to see.”

There is one extreme among the body of Christ which believes that we should have faith even if it means we die in the process, and on the other hand, we have Christians who are convinced God does not heal people today because we now have medical science. Others inappropriately use the phrase, “God is Sovereign” to “prove” that healing might or might not happen depending on “God’s sovereign will.” Some say, “I asked the Lord for healing, but we always have to leave room for the sovereignty of God.” These views are not supportable under the New Covenant.

People who don’t believe God is doing supernatural healings today and those who are intent on proving that God sometimes heals and sometimes doesn’t, will use some of the following examples to support their views. Let’s look at these in context with open hearts so we might gain a better understanding of what the Bible teaches us.

God’s Will

Some falsely believe that sometimes it is God’s will to heal and sometimes it is not—that healing is a random decision by God (healing one but not another). One pastor told me that when he prays for the sick, if someone is healed, then it was God’s will. If he prays for another and they

aren't healed, then it wasn't God's will. Besides the fact that this belief goes against one of the cardinal fundamental truths of our mutual denomination, it simply isn't true.

God's sovereign will is to provide for our healing through the suffering of Christ—to be the Lord Our Healer. He will not negate whom He has already declared Himself to be, nor will He whimsically do or not do what He promised.

If we are to be faithful to what is written, we must not bend Scripture to fit our personal experience but rather let us conform our experience to what is written. Let us be curious as to why one person is healed and why another is not *based on Scripture* and not invent our own "truths."

We can't live our lives thinking that "everything that happens is God's will." We need to be wise and understand what the will of the Lord is and work *forward* from there to see that His will is done.

After my two-year diligent search in the area of healing, it was apparent that physical healing is the will and provision of God. Part of Jesus' atoning sacrifice includes that, "By His wounds you were healed (1 Pet. 2:24)." Notice the past tense.¹

Jesus never said to anyone, "It isn't My *will* that you be healed." He didn't say, "It isn't *time* for you to be healed. I still have some things to work out in your heart." There was no "maybe" or "later" at all when it came to His will when people came to Him asking for a miracle. Jesus was the exact representation of the Father. What He did, clearly and profoundly demonstrates the will of God.

**Jesus Christ
is the same yesterday,
today, and forever.**

Hebrews 13:8

Not until we settle this fact can we begin to have faith to receive what Jesus suffered and died to give us. Only when we accept His *willingness* to answer our prayers as a guiding compass can we figure out why it sometimes seems they are not answered. When we ask and do not receive, instead of attributing this to the "sovereign will of God", we should diligently explore explanations that line up with what is written. The Bible, not our experience, is our spiritual guide.

Some will use examples before the New Covenant to attempt to show that healing isn't always God's will. But we are not under the Old Covenant. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus; let us focus our attention on the New Covenant. While we can benefit from studying the Scriptures before the coming of Christ, we need to be constantly aware that we are NEW Covenant believers about which it is written in Hebrews 8:6,

**"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry,
inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant,
which was established on better promises."**

How God dealt with the rebellious and complaining Israelites in the wilderness, David and Bathsheba, or Job is **not how He deals with us** under this new and better covenant based on better promises. Our sins are permanently taken away by the blood of Jesus and "by His wounds

¹ There is more proof about 1 Peter 2:24 including physical healing in Chapter 14.

we were healed.”² This was not true of anyone before the New Covenant. Furthermore, the gospels are overflowing with Jesus’ assurances that “whoever asks receives.”

So let us purposely address some of the common misunderstandings in the church when it comes to divine healing.

Thorn in the Flesh

It is **not true** that God gives physical ailments as thorns in the flesh to keep Christians humble. The problem with thinking this way is if we believe a sickness or hardship is from God to humble us (or teach us a lesson or to bring about a higher good), we will tend toward accepting the situation instead of resisting in Jesus’ name, not wanting to “interfere” with what He might be doing.³ Instead of learning more about His willingness to heal us, we will tend to needlessly look for what He might be trying to “teach” us.

One very prevalent false thinking used to “prove” that God makes some of us sick to keep us humble has to do with Paul’s thorn in the flesh. Let’s take a closer look at this passage.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.⁹ And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in **my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, **for Christ’s sake**. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Paul prayed *three* times that this messenger of Satan would depart from him. Significantly, Jesus also prayed three times, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.” Jesus was not asking the Father to heal Him of a disease. Jesus was about to be scourged and crucified and take upon Himself the sins of the world. This was clearly the will of God, and He knew it would be horrendous.

In like manner, Ananias was told by God to tell Paul, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.¹⁶ **For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.**”

If we read the passage above with the doctrinal bent of “Sometimes sickness is God’s will,” we might conclude that sickness was included in what the Lord refused to remove from Paul. Yet when we logically consider the context of 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 to include Chapter 11, we can see what Paul meant when he wrote “infirmities.” (Note: In each instance in these passages the word “infirmity” was the same Greek word.)

2 Corinthians 11:24-33

*From the Jews five times I received forty **stripes** minus one.²⁵ Three times I was **beaten** with rods; once I was **stoned**; three times I was **shipwrecked**; a night and a day I have **been in the deep**;²⁶ in **journeys** often, in **perils of waters**, in **perils of robbers**, in **perils of my own countrymen**, in **perils of the Gentiles**, in **perils in the city**, in **perils in the wilderness**, in **perils in the sea**, in **perils among false brethren**;²⁷ in **weariness and toil**, in **sleeplessness often**, in **hunger** and*

² If you don’t have a clear understanding of the difference between the provisions under the Old and New Covenant, please read my first book, [Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: a 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God.](#)

³ 1 Pet. 5:9, Eph. 6:10-13

thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: **my deep concern for all the churches.** ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my **infirmity.** ³¹ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; ³³ but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

Though obvious, please note that verse 30 is connected to verses 24-29. All of those verses are what Paul meant by “my infirmity.” He even encased the use of the word with yet another example in verses 31-33 of how threatened his life was.

Paul did not include as part of his “infirmity” that God refused to heal him of a disease. We know from chapter 12 that his “infirmity” was a messenger of Satan that afflicted him—the persecutions and hardships he faced.

Again, it is simply not true that each Christian has a thorn in the flesh.

Someone invented that concept, and others joined in the chorus. It is classic Consensus Christianity. There is no scripture to back the claim that Paul is talking about an illness God refused to heal, and certainly, there is no teaching here that because Paul had a thorn in the flesh, so do we all. Paul *never* wrote, “To each of us is given a physical ailment to keep us humble.”

Paul’s persecutions were greater than most of us will ever experience, and he is clearly referring to the infirmity of overwhelming suffering for the sake of Christ as his thorn in the flesh.

Anyone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, but observe what Paul wrote to his beloved brother Timothy concerning them.

2 Timothy 3:10-12

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹ *persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra*⁴—*what persecutions I **endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.*** ¹² *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus **will** suffer persecution.*

We do not need to ask for persecution. If you desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, you will face it. Neither should we ask for trouble. It is a fact of life in the world in which we live (Jn. 16:33). Rather we are to stand fully armed in Him against the efforts of the enemy.⁵

The passage above causes my mind to do a doubletake. How can he say the Lord delivered him “out of them all” when he says he suffered these things? Notice he writes that he “endured” them. So, it isn’t that the Lord prevented him from being persecuted, but that in the end, he lived through it. The most extreme example was his stoning. He was left for dead by the Jews, but the Lord raised him up.

Martyrdom was common in the early church, but martyrdom is not sickness. Our beloved brother Paul is thought to have been beheaded in the end, but even facing death, he wrote:

⁴ **Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra were part of the Galatian region.** This will be important to know as you continue reading this chapter. [Galatia - Roman Provinces in New Testament Map \(biblestudy.org\)](http://biblestudy.org/Galatia-Roman-Provinces-in-New-Testament-Map).

⁵ Eph. 6:10-13

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

It is written of Jesus that “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). He did not take pleasure in what He was about to face, but he did look forward to what it would accomplish for those He loved.

Similarly, Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ 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.”

Paul esteemed his afflictions as “light” in contrast to that which was working a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Again, he is not speaking of a sickness the Lord refused to heal. Rest assured; God knows how to speak to you about your current level of humility without making you sick. He is at work in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Paul’s Eyes

Some people think that Paul’s thorn in the flesh was a sickness in his eyes. Yet, we can see from the passages about Paul’s thorn in the flesh that **there is no mention of his eyes**. You might find this stunning because it is often presented as being a passage about his eyes. Search again. There is no discussion of his eyes at all when he speaks of his thorn in the flesh. It is taught as if it is a settled fact when it isn’t evident at all.

Consensus Christianity is very powerful. It forms doctrines by connecting passages that in context are not connected. For whatever reason, the teaching becomes standard because no one takes the time to “prove all things” or they hesitate to disagree with an esteemed teacher.

However, let us do so as it is crucial to better understand this topic. Here are some points of view.

Some have drawn the awkward conclusion that when Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus this left an injury in his eyes. Let’s look again at this passage and ask ourselves this: When Ananias laid hands on Paul to receive his sight, is there any indication that he was not *thoroughly* healed?

Acts 9:11-18

So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, **so that he might receive his sight.**"

¹³ Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, **has sent me that you may receive your sight** and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and **he received his sight at once**; and he arose and was baptized.

Neither the Lord nor Ananias said one word about partial healing. This theory doesn't stand up to examination. Paul's eyes were completely healed.

Another false "proof" about Paul's eyes is from his letter to the Galatians when he said that they would have taken out their eyes and given them to Paul. It is assumed by some that this meant Paul had a sickness in his eyes.

Galatians 4:13-15

You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. ¹⁴ And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

It is important to observe that the Greek word Paul uses for "infirmity" is the same word he used in his second letter to the Corinthians to describe his weakness due to his many afflictions for the gospel. We must not assume he meant sickness without more evidence.

Greatly respected commentators incorrectly conclude that Paul had a repulsive eye disease but that the Galatians, instead of rejecting him, received him and his ministry.

Some read into the text that he was not completely healed of this supposed disease, citing that Paul later signed his letter to them with large letters, again assuming that he couldn't see well.

Here is an alternate view that is more easily supported by Scripture. We read in Acts 14 that Paul was stoned by the Jews. After that, He went to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch which were cities in the region called **Galatia**.

What condition do you think Paul's body was after being stoned and left for dead by the Jews? It is reasonable to conclude that his entire body including his face and eyes was severely injured.

According to the oral Jewish traditions when someone was stoned, he was pushed by the first witness against him off a cliff twice his height onto rocks below in such a manner that he would land on his chest **and face**. Then he was turned over onto his back. If he was still alive, the second witness threw a large rock onto his chest. If that did not kill him, then all of Israel took up stones to kill him until he was dead.⁶

⁶ [How was someone killed by stoning in the Bible? - JesusAlive.cc](http://JesusAlive.cc)

Acts 14:19-22

Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.²⁰ However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

*²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, **they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,**²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*

When the Jews were satisfied that Paul was **dead**, they dragged his lifeless body out of the city. But the disciples gathered around him, and he miraculously rose up and went into the city. Either he wasn't quite dead yet or perhaps he was dead, and God brought him back to life. In either scenario, it was an amazing miracle that he could get up.

In this condition, Paul went to the region of Galatia. He came to them having recently been stoned and was doubtless a fearful sight. This is more likely the infirmity about which he spoke in his letter to the Galatians.

Another valid point is that after the record of Paul's stoning when doubtless his whole body was afflicted, there is no mention in the book of Acts of Paul needing assistance getting around due to damaged eyesight or any other lingering effect from the stoning. Instead, we see Paul as very active and continuing to preach the gospel and enduring further persecutions.

It is possible that Paul's stoning affected his eyesight, but this is not clearly stated. Perhaps his eyes grew old like so many of us and that is why he had someone else take down some of his letters which he only signed.

However, what is **not** possible is that his *eyesight* had anything to do with his thorn in the flesh as there is no connection made to it in the context of 2 Corinthians. Nor does he refer to his eyes as his thorn in the flesh in the letter to the Galatians when speaking of his eyes.

It is incorrect to say that the Lord *refused* to heal Paul. It is more probable that He had lingering effects from having been stoned by the Jews. Paul got up from having been left for dead! That was an immediate miracle if ever there was one. Yet, he wrote:

Galatians 6:17

From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

The New Christians Are Healed

There is no scriptural evidence to support the idea that all of us have a thorn in the flesh to keep us humble. However, this is not to imply that Christians were never sick. Apparently, many were sick because we see records of many being healed.

Acts 5:14-16

*And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,¹⁵ so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.¹⁶ Also a **multitude** gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and **they were all healed.***

Those who were saved and sick were healed. Notice again, as in the life of Christ, we read "and they were **all** healed."

Acts 19:11-12

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

Observe that healing was commonplace among believers. It wasn't a complicated issue for them as it often is for us. They didn't have centuries of traditional thinking about miracles. They believed in Jesus and were saved. They believed He wanted to save them and heal them. Both are provisions of the cross.

1 Peter 2:24

Jesus Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Epaphroditus' Sickness

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul talks about his fellow worker in the gospel who became ill. Let's look at this passage as sometimes people will say, "Well, what about Epaphroditus? He was sick," to demonstrate that Christians get sick (an apparent truth) and to support the false belief that healing doesn't always take place.

Philippians 2:25-30

*Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that **he was sick**.²⁷ For indeed **he was sick almost unto death**; but **God had mercy on him**, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.²⁸ Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that **when you see him again you may rejoice**, and I may be less sorrowful.²⁹ Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem;³⁰ because **for the work of Christ he came close to death**, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.*

Where we read "but God had **mercy** on him," it is safe to conclude that Epaphroditus was healed. Otherwise, Paul would not have sent him to the Philippians since he nearly died of his sickness and wouldn't have been well enough to travel (Phil. 4:18).

Paul shares the reason for Epaphroditus' sickness. He was working exceedingly to supply that which was lacking from the Philippians' giving. He was working to support Paul's needs and the work of the ministry there, perhaps to an extreme. His body became weak, and he became ill.

Perhaps you can identify with this type of lifestyle. We aren't paying attention to our bodies telling us to slow down because we have work we need to do to help someone else. Parents often become exhausted trying to meet the needs of their families—needs that must be met for their well-being. Pastors and pastors' wives frequently need to take time off because they have worked so hard at their calling that they are exhausted. This was the case with Epaphroditus. This labor of love was from his heart, but it taxed his mortal frame.

I like that Paul wrote, "God had **mercy** on him." It was Epaphroditus' "fault" that he worked so hard that he became ill. Even so, God had mercy on him and healed him. This delights me because sometimes we forget that our bodies and psyches need care as we get wrapped up in all there is "to do." We suddenly realize that we are spent. But God has mercy on us even when we get ourselves into this position.

The fact that Epaphroditus was sick does not support the view that Christians aren't always healed. It simply demonstrates that we sometimes get sick when we overwork—that we live in bodies that are still mortal and need care. Even so, God had mercy on him and healed him.

Mortal Bodies and Our Fallen Planet

There are sicknesses and diseases in this world, and many of them are contagious. So, naturally, even Christians can become ill. We have the reality of growing older which sometimes means that our body parts grow weak. Often accidents and weather happen which might injure us. These are realities we face on a planet that is still fallen and full of fallen people. Even so, God is our Healer.

About twenty-five years ago, while lamenting the fact that I had yet again caught some nasty virus at the school where I taught, David pointed out that Jesus provided for our healing because He knew it was a possibility we would be sick. He said, "How can we be healed if we aren't sick?"

Healing is provided for us because God knows that not until He returns for us will we be immortal.

After David relieved me of my "guilt" of being sick, the thought came to me that if we could believe Jesus to heal us when we became sick, couldn't we also believe Him not to get sick in the first place?

Over the next years, preemptively praying became a habit in my life. If a staff member or a student was sick at school (nearly daily this was the case), instead of my usual response of accepting that catching the virus was possible, I changed my response.

I'd say in my heart, "I do not accept that I will automatically get this illness. By His wounds I was healed, in Jesus' name."

I began to purposely "bring my thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ" and rejected news stories warning me of this or that "season" of sickness. We would pray, "Lord, it isn't sickness season in *our* home. By your wounds we are *healed*. We reject sickness in Your name."

Amazingly, my annual bouts of sickness were notably less frequent or shorter in duration, and in the space of two years, there was not even as much as a snuffle. We continue to this day to battle what's "out there" in this way—first of all not to accept that we will automatically get sick, and secondly to believe that if we do, by His wounds we *were* healed.

Timothy's Tummy Troubles

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul gives Timothy some advice for his role as a pastor. Inserted among these words is this short word of personal admonition in verses 22 and 23.

Keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

Since God used Paul and Timothy to see many miracles and healings take place, this sentence causes me to pause. My first reaction is, "What? These two believed in and experienced the power of God more than most disciples. Why didn't Paul lay hands on Timothy to be healed? Or why didn't Timothy believe God to be healed?"

These are reasonable questions.

It was the topic of my second book, Overcoming the Overwhelming. We may have seen God do many mighty works in our lives, and yet sometimes, there seems to be this one area that is not conquered. We pray and it seems nothing happens. In some instances, we realize that our faith needs to grow, and after our faith grows, we see a breakthrough.

Other times, things are going on that we don't understand. When we finally do, the problems can easily be addressed. Perhaps you have tummy troubles, and unknown to you, you are ingesting something that is causing them. You don't need healing. You need to stop ingesting the

substance. You might have acid reflux and the doctor tells you to stop drinking carbonated beverages. You take his advice, and you are healed. Or maybe you have liver disease, and the doctor tells you to stop drinking alcohol. You stop and your liver heals itself. Your back is aching. You buy a new bed or start exercising and miraculously your back is fixed. You have horrid headaches, and a friend asks you if you are drinking beverages with aspartame. As an experiment, you stop ingesting foods and beverages with aspartame, and your monster headaches stop.

In these examples, it's not that we don't have faith or even that we need a miracle. We simply need to figure out the cause and take action to fix the problem. Healing might come anyway, but if we continue to engage in what is causing the problem, the trouble will resurface. Discovering these solutions often seem to "just happen", because God is at work and the Spirit of God is leading us.

There was a moment in time a few years ago when it appeared I was beginning to lose my memory. My car keys would be found in the fridge. I couldn't remember what I did or said one minute ago. Facts that should have easily been in my memory, escaped me. This was so frightening that I didn't even share it with David, not wanting to worry him.

So, the online research began, which was frustrating because so much of it seemed opinion, and other things frightened me. One night, though, there was an article about some medical research on the memory of people my age.⁷ The article said that they didn't know why a refined form of chocolate had improved mental function (as demonstrated on MRIs of the brain of the medical test participants), and the substance was not yet on the market, but they concluded that perhaps the flavonoids in chocolate contributed to the improvement of memory.

Immediately the search for "foods high in flavonoids" began, and the first thing to pop up was "green tea." So, I started to drink green tea every morning as an experiment. In one month my mental function was completely restored, and over many months my mental abilities were rejuvenated, exceeding what they were previously.

There was a natural solution in my case. My memory didn't need to be healed in the sense of a supernatural miracle. God brought healing to me by showing me a natural solution.

This was likely going on with Timothy. He needed help with his digestion which was affecting his overall health. Paul's solution was for him to take a little wine. But most commentators believe there was something more going on in Timothy's thinking that needed to be addressed.

Notice, Paul writes Timothy to no longer drink water *only*. Commentators say this can be translated as, "No longer be a water-drinker." In other words, Timothy was what we today call a "teetotaler"—someone who abstains completely from alcoholic beverages. Paul had just written, "Keep yourself pure," which Timothy was obviously eager to do in that he abstained from alcohol.

The commentators pointed out that there were religious sects among the believers that abstained from wine as a religious *requirement*. We were part of a similar sect and for 25 years never touched a drop of alcohol. Paul knew that Timothy was influenced by these teachers, so after telling him to keep himself pure, he subtly addressed the issue Timothy faced.

"Timothy, don't go on drinking water only. Mix in a little wine to help with your digestion and other weaknesses." The wine wasn't recommended so that Timothy would become drunk but for his health. Paul, in essence, encouraged Timothy to not be so legalistic about wine that he couldn't use it to improve his health. One commentator mused that perhaps Luke was with Paul and this recommendation was more like a prescription. Paul knew Timothy's habits—that he was a "water-drinker." He also knew he needed medicine. This would require that Timothy lay aside his "law" of not having one drop of alcohol.

A friend of my grandmother had a daughter (an acquaintance of mine and my age) with a skin condition on her face that made her very insecure. Even though this woman was a devout Christian, drinking alcohol was strictly forbidden by our church, *and* her daughter was only a teenager, she started giving her girl a small amount of Port wine each night. I honestly can't

⁷ [Can Chocolate Improve Cognitive Function? MRI Study – Aim Medical Imaging](#)

remember if this was recommended by her doctor or if she just knew of Timothy's situation and wondered if it would help. Amazingly, the skin condition cleared up.

My mind wanders here. Taking medicine and drinking alcohol are not part of my lifestyle—not even over-the-counter medicines. There was a time in my life when these were religious issues for me, but now it's just a choice to keep myself healthy and free of substances.

However—a recent internal procedure revealed duodenal ulcers, and without hesitation, I took the acid inhibitors prescribed to me that would allow them to heal. When a potentially deadly bacterial infection was found in my digestive tract about a year ago, without a blink I took the strong antibiotic prescribed to combat it. We mustn't allow our "principles", religious, political, or personal, to keep us from receiving the life-saving help we need.

Now, for the discussion of vaccines and such matters, here is my opinion. May the Lord guide you to make the decisions that are right for you. Some have chosen not to get annual flu shots and others have decided to have them for personal reasons. My advice is to educate yourself and make your decisions before God according to your faith.

One of us might decide to be vaccinated and we are trusting God that the vaccine will not harm us. Another among us might choose to not take a vaccine and believe God that we won't get sick or that we will be healed if we do. Let each person be thoroughly convinced before the Lord. However, do not let fear be your motivator—not the fear of getting sick or the fear of getting a vaccine. Make your decision before the Lord. He will guide you.

Back to Timothy's tummy troubles. He didn't need divine healing. He needed divine wisdom and likely divine correction about his religious abstinence from wine. Paul delivered the message which resulted in Timothy's improved health both spiritually and physically.

All of that to say this: **Using Timothy's frequent digestive issues to "prove" that God sometimes refuses to heal people is not logical.** If we are doing something or not doing something that affects our health, the answer is to change. God's desire is healing, and sometimes we just need to use common sense. If you are prone to jumping off the roof and breaking bones, the answer is to stop jumping off the roof. If you choose not to eat because of all the additives in foods and become unhealthy, the answer isn't to abstain from eating entirely but to find pure sources of food.

We call this "common sense", and it is a gift from God.

**Immediately
there fell from his eyes
something like scales,
and he received his sight
instantly;
and he arose and was baptized.**
Acts 9:18

