

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## Physical vs. Spiritual Sin

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Dear Brethren:

In previous issues of this *Monthly Letter*, we have addressed topics of historic interest concerning doctrines of God's Church over the last seventy years, and the means by which revealed truth has been systematically corrupted. In this issue we want to address yet another key doctrine—critical to all true Christians—which has been widely misunderstood and perverted both by liberal as well as so-called "conservative" voices. We are talking about physical vs. spiritual sin. What was *the faith once delivered* on the topic of sin, and is there really a distinction between physical and spiritual sin? If so, what is that difference, and what effect should it have in the way we think about our obligations of obedience before God?

The truth is, there *was* an original teaching about physical and spiritual sin which came to us from Jesus Christ through the inspired preaching of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. It is also true a subtle perversion of that teaching was instrumental in putting many of God's children into spiritual slumber. Furthermore, even some well-meaning ones who consider themselves to be conservative have likewise wrested these principles to their own spiritual endangerment. All of these factors we will analyze in this month's issue.

### What Were We First Taught?

Allow the words of Mr. Herbert Armstrong to confirm the original teaching about spiritual and physical sin. From the 1952 article entitled, *Does God Heal Today?*, he stated:

Sin is the transgression of the law. Spiritual sin is the transgression of God's spiritual law, the law of LOVE summed up in the Ten Commandments. Those are spiritual principles. The penalty of that kind of sin is death; but it is the second death. It's appointed to all men once to die, whether you are a Christian, whether

converted, or not. And after that the judgment. But the penalty is eternal death. It is the second death in the lake of fire. That is the penalty of sin.

But there are physical laws, too, that regulate your physical health. And if you break those laws, or if they are broken, it is transgression of law, and it exacts a PENALTY. It might be an accident, or something you didn't do yourself at all—you might not have been guilty of any wrong and yet nature's laws have been violated, or you wouldn't be sick. It isn't natural to be sick. It's unnatural, and wrong.

So sickness is only the penalty of physical transgression, and whenever one is sick, he is paying that penalty! The penalty of transgressing these physical laws that regulate the human body is PAIN, suffering, sometimes the first or physical DEATH. It's a physical transgression, or sin—and there's a physical PENALTY for that sin.

Next, notice an excerpt from an article in the October, 1948, *Plain Truth* magazine, *Is All Animal Flesh Good Food?*, concerning the Biblical laws about clean and unclean meats found in Leviticus 11:

This is a basic law—a revelation from God to instruct man in which kinds of flesh will properly digest and assimilate in the human system, and which will not. It is not a part of God's great SPIRITUAL LAW, summed up in the Ten Commandments.

It is necessary to understand that God is the author of ALL law, and there are countless laws in motion. There are laws of physics and chemistry. You know of the law of gravity. There is the great immutable SPIRITUAL law to regulate man's relationship to God and to fellowman—the law of LOVE—the Ten Commandments. God gave His nation Israel civil statutes and judgments—NATIONAL laws for the conduct of the national government. Israel was also His church, under the Old Covenant. . . .

And then we must realize THERE ARE PHYSICAL LAWS WORKING IN OUR BODIES, REGULATING OUR HEALTH. Now this MEAT question has to do with *these* laws! . . .

Now the eating of wrong food is not a transgression of this spiritual law, and is not a sin *in this sense*. To violate the physical laws of health brings the penalty of disease, disability, pain, sickness, and the *first* death. It is not necessarily spiritual sin. . . .

It may not be spiritual sin to eat unclean meats. Yet, if one deliberately does it out of lust of appetite, that breaks the tenth command and becomes sin. But in all events wrong food injures the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It defiles the BODY if not the *man*, and if we defile our bodies God will destroy us. Read 1 Cor. 3:17.

So here we find a synopsis of the original teaching concerning physical and spiritual sin. This teaching is part of *the faith once delivered* by Jesus Christ to His Church of the last days.

### **How This Teaching Was Perverted**

In spite of Mr. Armstrong's warning to the contrary, many members of God's church began to emphasize the difference between physical and spiritual sin as a way to justify eating wrong things and engaging in behaviors prohibited by God. This was not so prevalent during those early years of the Radio Church of God when there was greater zeal manifested for God's revealed way, and significant evidence of legitimate "first love." But as time went by and many became weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9), a restlessness set in and many became anxious to find ways to make God's expectations of us "easier" to achieve. In past issues we have covered the topic of Israel's proclivity to water down God's truth to make it more palatable for carnal inclinations. This is what ancient Israel did time and time again, and this is also what spiritual Israel did—both in the first century church as well as the last-day church (Hebrews 4:1–2). A corruption of the marriage doctrine in 1974 was the final blatant evidence that church members were not willing to restrain themselves from carnal lusts, as they sought to justify the sin of divorce and remarriage. Once they realized Christ was not really returning in 1975 as they had falsely surmised, they and their ministers clamored for "relief" from God's "yoke." The focus on making "physical sin" of little concern was just one more symptom of this liberalizing virus which ultimately destroyed our parent organization over the course of the next twenty years.

### **Is Some Sin Less Important?**

As Mr. Armstrong first confirmed, there is a difference between physical and spiritual sin, but that does not give us an excuse to differentiate for the sake of violating cardinal laws. When physical laws are broken, there is an immediate cause-and-effect result experienced in the flesh. God made it that way. Touching the hot stove with unprotected flesh always results in a burn. When we eat things God never intended for the human body, it causes immediate harm to that body, and sickness and disease will result. Even if we may not feel immediate suffering from eating food made with processed sugar, white flour, harmful oils, chemical preservatives, or unclean meats, doing so sets in motion a chemical reaction within our delicate digestive systems which will manifest in illness, sooner or later, just like that burn from the stove. Sometimes the

penalties are quick, and we are reminded immediately that we violated a physical law. Other times the damage is done progressively over time, and we may not be aware of the slow process of destruction until it is well advanced. But either way, when we abuse our bodies in violation of immutable laws God spoke into existence, the penalties for that sin—transgression of the law—is automatic.

But furthermore, for the called of God, there is added responsibility. Yes, eating pork may be merely a physical sin for the uncalled of this world. But once one is called into God's Church and learns that the laws of clean and unclean meats have not been done away, it then becomes a *spiritual sin* for any of us to intentionally violate that law! This is what Mr. Armstrong confirmed above when he said, "Yet, if one deliberately does it out of lust of appetite, that breaks the tenth command and becomes [spiritual] sin."

Once we are taught the difference between right and wrong, and we intentionally ignore that knowledge, such *rebellion* becomes a violation of God's spiritual law, and makes us subject to the second death. The deceived masses of the world eat all manner of filthy things in good conscience, because they do not know any better. Because it is a physical law and physical sin to them, they pay a physical price from pain and physical suffering. But the called ones of God who have been taught those laws and *still* eat unclean food, will not just suffer physical penalties as those in the world, but also become liable under the *spiritual law* for rebellion against the Creator. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. . . ." (1 Samuel 15:23). In fact, it is *idolatry* and it is *lust* to continue in those things God has showed us to be wrong. We are commanded to take care of these physical bodies as the repository of His very own Spirit.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Therefore, there is no way any of us should try to diminish the importance of the physical laws God created in comparison with the spiritual laws. For members of God's true Church, intentional violation of those physical laws—when we know better—becomes spiritual sin! So trying to distinguish between the two sets of laws becomes a moot point. Physical laws exact a physical penalty for disobedience—illness, injury, and the first death. Spiritual laws exact a spiritual penalty for disobedience—loss of hope for eternal life, the second death. But God expects us to honor *all* of His laws, and refusal to do so makes us guilty of rebellion—most definitely a spiritual sin. Notice that God certainly does make a distinction between sins of ignorance vs. sins of volition:

And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it

shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him (Numbers 15:28–31).

This is why it was foolish for many in God's church to begin segregating sin in their minds. As a symptom of that spirit of apostasy which crept in more than thirty years ago, many began to think they were OK in violating physical laws, as long as they were willing to accept the physical consequences. The rationale went like this: "Well I know I will probably regret eating this piece of ham, but if I do not, I will offend my unconverted family, and after all, it is only a physical sin—not a spiritual one. Since I do not do it very often, there should not be any serious long term effects." What is not considered in this logic is the fact such a choice to *knowingly* violate a law of God (to make it *easier* on us in the world) is idolatry—putting a greater priority on something other than God—a spiritual sin. Likewise, eating the donut, Twinkie, or chocolate éclair (made with white flour and full of processed sugar) which is "just too tempting to pass up" is lust, also a spiritual sin. To those in the world, these things are truly only physical sins. They do not know any better. But to those God has taught these cardinal principles, we become responsible for upholding those physical laws as part of our *spiritual* obligation of obedience!

### **Fallacy of So-Called "Conservatives"**

There are some who—having witnessed the ultimate abuse of this doctrine on physical vs. spiritual sin—have concluded this teaching by Mr. Armstrong must have been wrong to begin with. These are ones who consider themselves more conservative than Mr. Armstrong, and assert there is no distinction in classification of sin. They claim all sin is spiritual sin, and there is no such thing as physical sin. These assert that *all* physical illness or injury in the church is *always* a result of breaking some spiritual law, and is God's direct punishment to get our attention. This rationale carries that if one stubs his toe on the coffee table in the middle of the night—and experiences severe pain and temporary disability as a result—it is automatic that God pronounced a direct curse on that individual to get his attention for some spiritual sin in his life. But is that true?

There is no question God can and does seek to get our attention *at times* by withdrawing protection so we may become vulnerable to bad things. When we are plagued with problems, it behooves us to stop and examine ourselves to see if we might be experiencing unnecessary suffering because of compromising God's spiritual law. It is always possible God is trying to teach us something through Fatherly chastisement.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons (Hebrews 12:6–8).

This is precisely how God worked with Job to teach him something he had not yet learned, even though Job was already considered a very righteous man (Job 1:1). God withdrew His divine protection and intentionally allowed Satan access to persecute him. Along with the death of his children and destruction of his possessions, God allowed Satan to afflict Job with illness:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown (Job 2:6–7).

In most cases, the manifestation of boils is a direct result of broken physical laws within the human body. But in this case, there is no question Job's healthy body was afflicted "miraculously" with a very painful disease.

But to claim that *all* illness experienced by God's people is a result of Job-like trials is ludicrous. A particular illness or injury may very well have such an origin, but to assert that *all* illness we experience is an automatic proof God has "zapped" us for committing a spiritual sin is just as absurd and unbalanced as the liberal rejection of the law altogether. When will we finally come to accept the proper interpretation of these matters, by the revelation Jesus Christ inspired through authorized teachers?

Notice one text that definitely supports Mr. Armstrong's original teaching on the distinction between physical and spiritual sin:

If any man see his brother sin *a sin which is not unto death*, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and *there is a sin not unto death* (1 John 5:16–17) [emphasis mine].

How is it possible there is a sin that does not result in death, when God also said, ". . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Did God contradict Himself? We know that is not true. The answer is in understanding the difference between physical and spiritual sin. God is saying there is one classification of sin that *will* always result in the second death, and one that does not result in the second death! Those sins that do not automatically result in spiritual death are the physical laws. Yes, breaking that physical law will result in suffering and the first death. But 1 John chapter five is showing us there are certain laws God made whose penalties do not automatically result in loss of salvation, in spite of what certain men are now claiming.

What these so-called conservatives fail to realize is that through their hypothesis, they are actually rejecting the true meaning of the body of Jesus Christ in the Passover service. Christ commanded two emblems for the forgiveness of sin—one physical and one spiritual:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:26–28).

The unleavened bread—picturing the broken body of Christ—did *not* signify the forgiveness of spiritual sin which makes us subject to the second death. Only the blood of Christ represents the forgiveness of spiritual sins. This was another perversion which emerged from our parent body in the 1970s as they sought to dilute the promise of God to be our physical Healer and point us to Satan's counterfeit medical system. The broken body of Christ signifies our access to physical healing by a merciful God. One of His names is Jahweh-Rapha—God our Healer (Exodus 15:26). That promise to be our Physician is distinct from the promise to grant spiritual salvation through the shed blood of Christ.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and *with his stripes we are healed* (Isaiah 53:5) [emphasis mine].

Partaking of the unleavened bread of the Passover service signifies our belief in God's promise to forgive our *physical* sins through divine healing! The very fact He commanded *two distinct emblems* in that solemn service is proof positive there is a difference between physical and spiritual sin. If it is true that all suffering derives only from spiritual sin, then it was unnecessary to have anything more than the wine in the Passover service! Yet the Apostle Paul confirmed the importance of *both* emblems for true Christians:

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Corinthians 11:27–30).

Rejecting the faith once delivered from God to His Church concerning physical vs. spiritual sin prevents us from partaking of Passover correctly, because without a proper acceptance of the meaning of both the blood *and the body* of Christ, we are actually eating and drinking damnation to ourselves. And just as Paul affirmed, because of this perpetual proclivity

toward apostasy among God's called children, *many* are weak and sickly, and *many* sleep. This prophecy applies both physically and spiritually. Many are sick *physically* because they refuse to do the things God commanded to have health and to be healed. They are also sick *spiritually* because rejection of God's commands—both physical and spiritual—puts us in opposition to His will, and causes Him to withdraw His blessings and protection. Are we receiving the promises of health, both physically and spiritually?

### **Natural Consequences or Miraculous Curse?**

In some cases, we may experience illness or injury because God is directly interceding to get our attention to finally address a spiritual matter we have been ignoring. We must each take that possibility very seriously in our own lives. But in many other cases, God's people also suffer physical illness, disease, and injury because we simply are breaking physical laws which exact an automatic physical penalty, even as Mr. Armstrong taught us. If everyone in God's church were faithfully obeying the physical laws that govern these bodies, we would have much less sickness and disease than we do today. That is not to say the church would be totally free of any instances of illness. Brethren, be very careful not to make the mistake of assuming one who is suffering is automatically guilty of some hidden sin. Jesus Christ taught us not to jump to any such conclusions.

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents:* but that the works of God should be made manifest in him (John 9:1–3) [emphasis mine].

Mr. Raymond Cole likewise taught us that some of our very own may have intentionally been afflicted with severe disability so that God might one day create a great miracle in their healing. We must always keep all of these things in mind and never think critically of anyone else who may be suffering. God has not given us to know His specific will in all of these things.

But in most cases, other than a divine miracle from God to perpetrate disability, any *remaining* instances of illness would have to be the result of breaking physical laws. To claim *all* illness in the church results from God striking us down for spiritual infractions is simply a rejection of the faith once delivered.

### **A Major Source of Our Problems**

The truth is, no matter how many years many of us have been in God's church and have been taught laws concerning proper diet, many of us—even the majority of us—still seem to have

difficulty crucifying the carnal appetites and resisting polluted "foods." The urge to eat those things which taste "wonderful" but are poison to the human body is still very hard to resist. And given the fact some of God's people—who know better—are still putting garbage into their bodies, why would we not expect to see the ramifications in physical sickness and disease? Do we think God has suspended those physical laws of the universe for members of the church? Do we not recognize that when we defile our bodies with poison, we are subject to the very same curses that plague the uncalled masses of the world? The real difference is that when we eat those things that pollute the temple of God, we become guilty of lust—a spiritual sin—because we know better. So when God's people cannot control those perverted appetites of the flesh, we not only pay the same physical prices of the world, but we also become guilty of spiritual sin against God, which without repentance leads to the second death.

With that in mind, we should utterly reject any notions coming from former members of God's church who have discarded the divine revelation of Jesus Christ and are now attempting to redefine sin according to private interpretation. When we break physical laws, we *do* pay physical prices. It is also true God may allow miraculous episodes of affliction—not a result of broken physical laws—to chastise us for a spiritual defect. But as we have already emphasized, we must never be guilty of trying to judge such distinctions in the life of anyone else. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). And since God has given *none of us* the ability to read the heart and mind of anyone else, we are not capable of diagnosing anyone else's circumstance. Anyone who tries to do so is putting himself in the place of God.

There are many who have certainly been guilty of abusing the physical body through poor diet, lack of exercise, or exposure to harmful substances for many years, but then have changed and are now eating correctly and taking care of their bodies to the best of their abilities. Yet some illnesses that are a result of years of broken laws are not automatically resolved by adopting good physical habits for a few months or even years. Once severe damage takes place to our organs and tissues, it requires the miraculous healing of God to correct. In many cases, we have seen such miracles over past decades in the church. In other cases, we have seen God allow the results of those past broken laws to linger, according to His perfect will. In some cases God does not remove a penalty altogether, because it is valuable for us to be reminded of the consequences of our past actions. Such was the case with the Apostle Paul, who asked to be healed of a particular affliction, but did not receive his petition for reason.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Corinthians 12:7–9).

But in all likelihood, these examples are *exceptions* to the rule, and not what is most prevalent in the church. In most cases, having access to God's divine healing is a matter of faithfully following God's instructions. He has promised to heal us!

### **The Promise of Healing**

All healing—whether physical or spiritual—is the forgiveness of sin. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Therefore, healing is the miraculous wiping away of the penalty for broken laws. In some cases a particular illness might be hereditary, the result of sin in one or more ancestors that is passed down to subsequent generations (Exodus 20:5). But even if the affliction is not the result of personal sin, there was sin involved—broken law—to create that state of disease. In most cases, if we are honest, we can trace most of our afflictions to our personal choices. But once again, we can never judge that in someone else's life—only our own. Even with hereditary weaknesses, it is usually our own infractions of the law which trigger the penalty. Those with genetic weaknesses may suffer *sooner* for breaking certain laws than do others with stronger constitutions, but let us never forget it is dangerous to pass off our illnesses on ancestors in an attempt to deflect responsibility. It may well be that we are not personally guilty for a physical penalty, but we should be very cautious about making such a conclusion.

Because God knows we are weak and subject to sin, in His awesome love and mercy He provided the means for our salvation from physical sin:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and *if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him* (James 5:14–15) [emphasis mine].

As Mr. Armstrong taught us, God has absolutely bound Himself to heal us, when we are right with Him. But as he also taught through God's Holy Spirit, the primary reasons we do not receive healing are either 1) continuation of breaking health laws which heap physical penalty upon penalty, or 2) a lack of real faith to trust Him as Physician and Healer. In the first instance, if we have not repented of breaking the health laws which might have gotten us into problems to begin with, we cannot expect forgiveness for that sin. Forgiveness comes through repentance, and repentance is being sorry for the infraction and turning to walk the other way. If we continue to break those same physical laws, we cannot expect God to heal.

Mr. Raymond Cole used to use the example of scurvy to illustrate the point. Ancient mariners suffered from scurvy because of the lack of citrus fruits in their diets on long sea voyages. Once the connection was made between citrus (or lack thereof) and scurvy, whether they recognized it as such or not, they discovered a physical law of God built into the human

system. When citrus is part of the diet (with requisite Vitamin C), there are no symptoms of scurvy in an otherwise healthy body. So to avoid the physical penalty for breaking that law, we must make foods high in Vitamin C part of our regular diets.

But what about the person who is violating that principle and not eating citrus? If he suffers from scurvy, is it enough just to ask for anointing from the ministry? Can he continue breaking the health law that requires nutrients from citrus and simply expect God to make that physical law null and void in his life? God is ever willing to heal His people, but He is not going to nullify the physical laws He set into motion which govern these bodies. If God *did* provide miraculous healing for scurvy while the individual continued to be guilty of malnutrition from faulty diet, he would wind up right back in the same place. This example illustrates the need to stop breaking the laws which result in illness, as one key element to being healed.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because *we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22) [emphasis mine].

### Faith Is Crucial

The next key element for receiving God's divine healing is faith. We must stop breaking the physical laws that triggered our suffering, but as we have already seen, the damage already done may be irreversible—physically. That is why we need the mercy of a loving God to forgive sin—to remove the penalty that has naturally befallen us. That is also why it is called *divine* healing, and receiving that healing requires real *faith!* We are talking about a miracle which cannot be performed by anyone but our true Physician and Healer. It is the subtlety of Satan which deceives men into believing they can heal themselves. Even those advocating natural remedies and such make claims of the ability to be "healed" through herbology. Such notion is just as diabolical as trust in mainstream medicine for physical salvation. Yes, certain natural herbs have properties that are very beneficial for human bodies, but use of those things is never "healing." Supplying needed vitamins and minerals which have been missing may solve certain problems because we have stopped the sin of malnutrition, but that is not true healing. That is simply a positive change to stop violating the law! But *healing* is the miraculous wiping away of a penalty that is otherwise *impossible* to remove! Only God can heal. Only God can miraculously remove a penalty that He wrote into the fabric of this physical universe.

God has promised to heal us—miraculously wipe away an otherwise permanent penalty.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; (Psalms 103:2–3).

But do we really believe *both* promises found in this passage? Mr. Armstrong referred to the above text a number of times to point out our typical inconsistency. We absolutely trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ to forgive our spiritual sins, do we not? When we come before God's throne in prayer and ask for Christ's sacrifice to wipe away our guilty past, most of us come away from that prayer truly believing we have been forgiven. But the second part of the promise is that He heals all our diseases! Do we believe that promise the same way we believe our spiritual sins are wiped away when we ask to come under Christ's shed blood? It is the same faithful God making both promises. He promises to forgive both our spiritual *and* physical sins.

So why is it we many times do not receive true forgiveness of physical sins—the wiping away of the penalties of sickness and disease in our bodies? Mr. Armstrong said it is because we often do not really have the faith to trust in our divine Physician and Healer. Real faith is never something we can "work up" in a time of need. We have either been building increased confidence in God over time and manifesting that faith in our daily decisions, or we have not. If we do not really have confidence we are in God's hands and that He will not let anything happen to us that is not part of His will, in time of crisis we will default to something else we *do* trust. Unfortunately, all too many of God's children have proved they cannot yet trust Him implicitly to save them. But until we face certain difficult trials, we may not know our faith is yet weak. So even when we fail to trust God—and resort to Satan's counterfeit medical system instead—if we at least recognize it as a failure of faith and refuse to justify it, we can use that experience to make real spiritual progress the next time.

But those who seek instead to justify having internal surgeries and taking man's derived medications are only asking for trouble. The best of man's wisdom is foolishness to God (1 Corinthians 3:19). Putting our trust in man's medicine will only lead to more broken health laws. While certain "therapies" may seem to be a blessing in the short run, it is still part of Satan's deception which will backfire in time. When will we come to recognize that God does not work through Satan and this world? We have access to the most abundant promises through our calling from God. When will we finally break free of being enamored with man's wisdom and stop viewing his medical system as a "blessing"? It is not!

The faithful of God must learn to trust Him implicitly. He will never share His glory with anyone else, least of all Satan's counterfeit doctors. If we really want to have access to God's forgiveness of physical sin—as well as spiritual sin—we must learn to trust God as our Healer. Even as Job was willing to put himself completely in God's hands without qualification, so must we. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him . . ." (Job 13:15).

When we finally get to the point we *believe* we will not die unless God so wills it, then we will be evidencing real faith in Him. God has not promised that none in His church would die the first death. Many have gone to sleep and now rest in the grave according to His will. In fact, it is a blessing to those who have remained faithful and now need not fight the battles of this flesh

any longer. He is giving each of us our appointed time to build character and overcome the self. If our true focus is on the coming Kingdom of God, we are able to accept the limits God places on our physical existence. It is those with no confidence in God's promises of the future that seek to preserve these physical lives at any cost. But those who are truly guided through the Holy Spirit to seek spiritual goals do not have to be troubled by the weakening of these human bodies as they naturally wear down over time, and they do not need to grasp for Satan's help to try and preserve themselves.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works (Matthew 16:25–27).

God requires we learn to trust Him. That is easily said, but very difficult for us to do. We are all weak in the flesh, and fall so far short of the perfection of Jesus Christ. But we must never try to lower the bar of expectation to suit ourselves. We must always keep striving to take more steps forward toward true faith and obedience.

God *did* create a physical and a spiritual realm, and He made immutable laws that govern us in each respect. When we learn to honor those laws and resist the perversions of either liberal or so-called conservative voices who seek to corrupt the Truth, we can come under God's divine blessings and fulfill His will to prepare for the glory of His Kingdom. God wants us to have good things, both physically and spiritually. We can, if we are determined to hold fast to the faith once delivered by Jesus Christ to His Church of the last days.

Your devoted servant in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the typed name.

Jon W. Brisby