

The Lord Heals. The Lord Provides

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Of course He can. Of course He does. There may be
more to consider.

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INTRODUCTION

Subsequent to creation, there are two major historical events that have literally shaped and reshaped everything we know and understand as a race. They are Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, and the atoning work of Christ at Calvary. These two events seem to show up in most of what I have written for a reason. The first event is the cause of all of our struggles. The second is the solution.

God, doing supernatural work - whether it be healing or miracles - is simple in theology, and somewhat complicated in practicality. The prophet Isaiah was surely right when he wrote: "*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (**Isaiah 55:9**). There are things that are straight forward on the surface, but people's experience and reality raises questions.

These things are straight forward:

- God is Adonai. He is sovereign. Everything will bow to Him. Everything on the earth, above the earth, and below the earth will acknowledge God's sovereignty.

- God is Alpha and Omega. He is the beginning and the end of all things. He lives outside of time and is not limited by clock or calendar.
- God is El. He is limitless in power and in strength.
- God is El Elyon. He is limitless in power and strength, and is above all things.
- God is El Shaddai. He is limitless in power and strength, and is all-sufficient. There are no limits to His resources.
- God is Yahweh. He is the creator of all things. At His command, out of nothing came everything. If He created us, He can certainly ‘fix’ us.
- God is our banner. He is above us and goes before us. Like the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the desert, God leads us by His Holy Spirit.
- God is Abba Father. He loves us like a Dad loves His child.
- God is our Shepherd. He loves us, cares for us, and holds us close to His heart.

So, can God heal? Can God provide? YES!! He is, in fact, Yahweh Rapha - The Lord Heals. He is Yahweh Jireh – The Lord provides.

Not only are the aforementioned things true, He paid a great price to reverse all of the impact of both Adam’s sin and ours.

But then there are our prayer lists. There are wonderful people of faith who struggle with health issues day in and day out. Some of them have done so for years.

In 2013 I spent many hours waiting in the Regional Cancer Centre in London, Ontario, Canada. At first, I was waiting for a treatment plan, then getting treatments, then there was post-surgical follow-up. I was constantly stymied by the never-ending stream of cancer-stricken humanity.

I recall sitting there one day when a lady sat close by me, and asked: “Are you Tim Lukings?” “I am”, I said. She introduced herself to me as a lady who went to the same church that I did when I was a teenager. She and her husband were a wonderful Christian couple. I hadn’t seen her for literally decades. We had a lovely visit. A few weeks later, this lady went to be with the Lord.

It seems that sickness and disease are no respecters of persons. They affect Christian and non-Christian alike.

Can God heal? Yes He can!! Can God provide for those in need? He is El Shaddai. He is limitless in power and strength, and all-sufficient. He is Yahweh Jireh. God provides. But, currently 36% of the world’s population live in poverty. That is nearly 2 billion people. Between 9.1% and 9.4% of the population live in extreme poverty. That means that they exist on the equivalent of \$1.90 per day or less. Thus, we have the simple truth that God can heal and provide in contrast

to the very difficult circumstances in which some people live.

When it comes to these matters, we have to understand God's nature and God's Word well. Imbalance in our beliefs can lead to acceptance of something less than what God has for us. It can also lead to discouragement and even to judging others as lacking faith or living a life that is not pleasing to God. We should not dare to judge others as lacking faith or living substandard Christian lives. Judgment is the job of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that is sharper than a two-edged sword.

YAHWEH RAPHA THE LORD HEALS

Why does sickness or disease even exist? Let me give a crash course. I discuss this thoroughly in ‘Why NOT Me Lord’ and ‘Why Should I Become a Christian?’”, so here it is in simple form:

God gave Adam and Eve a perfect world in which to live. He also gave them free will. For that to be valid it required a choice. Every choice has consequences, good or bad.

- The result of eating the fruit from one tree in the middle of the garden was death. Spiritually, that meant separation from God. Physically it meant that their bodies would age and be subject to both pain and illness.
- Adam and Eve were the parents of all mankind. Since they chose to disobey God, all of their descendants were born sinful in nature and desire. Everyone has been born spiritually separated from God and destined to die physically.
- Since that moment people have behaved selfishly and hurt one another. We have systematically made decisions that lacked God’s wisdom, and which have harmed our environment and contaminated our food.

- After thousands of years, the result has been increased natural disasters, disease, cancers, and hard to manage viruses.

It is simple to establish the reason why sickness exists, and just as easy to establish the fact that the Lord heals. It is a piece of cake. Just read the Gospels.

Although some specific instances are recorded, Jesus healed more people than we could possibly imagine.

“News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.” (Matthew 4:24).

“And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.” (Matthew 6:56)

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” (John 21:25)

The fact that He did heal is clear evidence that He can. After all, He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

The fact that our hospitals are full of sick people, many of them Christian, raises a few questions. Many church’s prayer lists are long and include people with chronic conditions.

So, we have established the reason why sickness impacts the lives of many people, and that Jesus healed many while on earth. Let’s look at why we can believe that God’s ability to heal today is equally as simple as believing that He healed while on earth.

BY HIS STRIPES

The following prophecy was penned some seven hundred years before Christ was born. *“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5, NLT).* Jesus died to reverse all of the effects of Adams sin. Clearly, healing for sick bodies is a provision already made.

Romans 5:15-18 says, *“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! 16 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.”* (The Apostle Paul is saying that Adam only had to sin one time for sin to infiltrate all of humanity. Jesus, on the other hand, had to die for all of the sins all a humanity – all who lived before Him, and all who would come after. Sin came through one man.

Subsequent to Adam’s sin, the nature of every

human being was impacted immediately upon conception. David said: *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* (**Psalms 51:5**).

Similarly, the effect of sin was obliterated by one man; but clearly the impact of the sacrifice was required to be far greater in its impact than the offense.)

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.” (**Romans 5:17-18, NIV**)

See? It is as simple as that. *“By His wounds we are healed.”*, and, *“one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.”* That is not future tense, but present. So is this passage of Scripture: *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...”* (**Philippians 3:20**). Praise God! Healing is ours.

HIS THOUGHTS ARE HIGHER

The problem is that Christians are sick, some are poor, and we all live on this sin-filled planet – not in heaven where our citizenship lies. In some cases, our present reality as Christians doesn't reflect the Scriptural truth that our healing has been secured. Sometimes the Scriptural proclamation doesn't line-up with our present reality. Appearance can be deceiving. This is where that which is simple becomes a bit challenging. When we compare what we know about God and His Word with real life, whether it be our own life or that of someone we love, there may appear to be contradictions. There is not.

First, I want you to note from **Romans 5:17** that the benefits of Christ's sacrifice is a provision of God's grace; but it must be intentionally received by faith. We must participate in all of the effects of the atoning work of Christ by receiving them by faith. If you don't believe it, you don't receive it.

So man chose to sin, which caused death and everything that leads to it. Jesus was the cure for sin, and through His death He offers eternal life to all who believe. Everything that was caused by the presence of

sin on earth has been nullified by Christ for those who are in a faith relationship with Him. By His stripes we are healed, spiritually and physically. That is a fact! The only variable is when. Although they are bought and paid for, when will we reap the full benefits of Christ's atoning work? That is where the struggle lies. We are citizens of heaven now, but we won't enjoy all of the benefits of heaven until we leave this earth. We own the full benefits of Christ's atoning work now, but they won't be fully received while on this earth. In the meantime we are spiritually alive, we have the Holy Spirit in us, guaranteeing our salvation. So heaven is our blessed hope. We reap many benefits now from being in relationship with God by faith, but how and when they are received may not line up with our wishes.

As human beings we tend to want what we want when we want it. Let's not forget that God looks at our life from a different vantage point. As one who lives outside of time, and is above all things, He sees our life from a different perspective than we do. It's why Jesus very likely walked by the cripple beggar, of Acts 3, on numbers of occasions without healing him. He was crippled from birth, was now a full grown man, and had been carried to the gates daily to beg. On the many occasions that Jesus went to the temple, you have to believe that Jesus walked right by this man. It seems that, in the big picture, it was more beneficial to the kingdom of God for the baby church, as well as the unbelievers, to see the power of God at work through Peter and John. When Peter said: *"Silver or gold I do not*

have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." (**Acts 3:6**) it was an incredible testimony to the world that the power of God worked through ordinary people. Timing was important.

Then there was this story as recorded by the Apostle John: *"As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'"*

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, 'Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?'" 9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

*10 "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. 11 He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." 12 "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. (**John 9:1-12**).*

The Jews wrongly believed that people born with some form of handicap were the end result of someone's sin. A birth defect was punishment for something in their view. Jesus refutes that idea, and claims that this man's

blindness was now an opportunity to bring glory to God. He then heals the man of blindness.

Let's, for a moment, try to think as God thinks. This is a tall order, since His thoughts are higher than ours. We will do our best. What are His priorities? I believe in the following:

- Priority #1 – That as many as people as possible come to salvation. Jesus came primarily to seek and to save that which is lost. (Luke 19:10). Building the kingdom of God, one precious soul at a time, is of primary importance to our Lord.
- Priority #2 – Our spiritual strength, preservation, and growth. I believe that God wants us to grow spiritually so that we can work more effectively for His Kingdom on earth, and so that He has the privilege of giving us greater reward in heaven. This was the Apostle Paul's experience:
"Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Paul delighted in his weakness, whatever it was, because it kept him spiritually strong.

- Priority #3 – God is definitely interested in our present comfort. Often, Jesus would see hurting people, or people in need, and it is recorded that He had compassion on them.

Souls first, followed by our spiritual growth and strength, followed by our comfort while on earth. I believe those are God's priorities.

STANDING ON THE PROMISES

Just three days after the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea they came to a place called Marah. Their water supply was already running short, so to find a place that had water was quite a relief. It was not long, though, before they realized that the water at Marah wasn't drinkable. It was literally bitter, thus the name Marah. The name of town on the sign at the town's edge should have been their first clue (That was a joke).

There are many places in the Bible where I see people calling out to God to 'rapha' or heal them; but this is the only place that I found where God uses the Name 'Yahweh Rapha' (The Lord heals) to describe Himself. *"Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink. There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. 26 He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."* (**Exodus 15:25-26**).

What I would like to note here is that all of the promises of God are grace promises. They are underserved. There is nothing we can do to earn them. He graciously gives them to those He is in relationship with. At the same time, they come with certain expectations. We can't earn His grace, or any of the benefits thereof.

Still, there are conditions that are required to receiving God's free gift grace. For example, salvation requires faith. In the case of promised healing of the water at Marah, God instructed the children of Abraham to listen carefully to His instructions, do what is right in His eyes, keep His commands, and keep His decrees then God will be their healer. Obedience is important to receiving the gifts that come with God's grace. Obedience is an act of love and appreciation. The promises of God are 'yes' and 'amen'. They are a free gift and a sure thing. But, it is important that we understand what God expects of us as well – faith and obedience.

It is important to note that God's healing applies to more than drinkable water and sick bodies.

- He heals the spiritual agony that a sincere believer feels when he or she has behaved in a way that has disappointed God, and harmed their relationship. "I said, *"Have mercy on me, LORD; heal me, for I have sinned against you."* (Psalm 41:4)
- He heals emotional distress. "*He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.*" (Psalm 147:3)

- God even heals the spiritual atmosphere of entire nations that have gone astray. “...*if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*” (2 **Chronicles 7:14**)

Soon after my family began to attend church, my parents were asked to pick up an elderly man each Sunday morning. He was no longer able to drive. Occasionally He would tell us that God woke Him up in the middle of the night to pray. He would get out of bed, and literally stand on his big, black, leather-bound Bible. He told us He was standing on the promises of God. Do that!

RAPHA WRAP-UP

Let's summarize what we have learned so far.
We'll do it in simple and concise point form.

- Sickness and death was never God's plan for man. Sickness impacted humanity because of mankind's choice to exercise free-will, and allow the impact of sin to infiltrate our entire race.
- As a result, everyone who has ever lived since Adam and Eve have been impacted by the effects of sin on the earth. That includes sickness, emotional pain, and death – both spiritual and physical. In reality, the list of the effects of sin on the earth is a lengthy one.
- God paid a tremendous price to reverse the effects of sin, to provide healing, blessing beyond measure, and eternal life.
- Every act of God flows out of His nature, which includes love, goodness, mercy, grace, and kindness. *“LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint; heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How long, LORD, how long? Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.” (Psalm 6:1-4)*

- However God chooses to answer our prayer is an act of love. The full benefits of His atoning work at Calvary will be experienced when we leave this earth and enter our eternal home. In the meantime...
 - God can heal, and does heal
 - God can provide, and does provide
 - He does so based on a number of factors
 - Are we in a faith relationship with Him?
 - Do we believe that He can heal us?
 - What is best for us in the big picture? ...a picture that we can't see. When we have prayed, have we asked if there is an answer to our prayer that will benefit us in a way that is greater than our healing?
 - We cannot forget that God delights in giving people gifts, and using those people as instruments of healing and provision. Therefore, God may choose to do an obvious miracle, or He may delight in using medical professionals to facilitate your healing.

THE LORD PROVIDES

In the introduction of this booklet, I mentioned the extreme level of poverty that exists in unbelievable measure around our world. It is mind boggling.

When I was a young teen, my big sister lived in Santa Anna, California – a suburb at the south end of Los Angeles. Her home was about one hour and forty-five minutes from Tijuana, Mexico. We decided to make that a day trip as a family. The drive was beautiful, largely along the Pacific Ocean. I remember passing the very lovely city of San Diego. Then, we crossed the border into Mexico. Things may have changed since then, but I recall driving on a dirt road as we approached Tijuana. There were literally boulders in the road, and if there were laws for driving there, no one seemed to be aware of them. Not far in the distance, alongside the road, were shacks made of tin and cardboard. People called those shacks their home. When walking the streets of Tijuana, young boys tried selling their sisters for sex. While in line at the border, when returning to the United States, children were washing car windows, hoping for a donation. Others were trying to sell packs of gum. It was my first exposure to real poverty. Those are my most vivid memories of our trip to Mexico.

In the late 1990's, my oldest son and I went to Ukraine on a missions trip. It was about five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I was teaching in a Bible College in Dnepropetrovsk, a large city in southeastern Ukraine near the border of Russia. It was not like what we saw in Mexico by any stretch of the imagination, but there was real need there. We gave a married couple \$20 U.S. and were told that was like giving them a month's salary.

What I observed there was that their lack, or need for provision, caused them to trust God in a way that would put most of us in North America to shame. It did not weaken their faith. Their need to depend on God strengthened their faith. In fact, many people came into faith as a result of their need for provision. It resulted in them recognizing their need for The Provider. Their hearts were open.

My main purpose for being in Ukraine was to teach in a Bible College, but I had the privilege of preaching in many locations. If my memory serves me correctly, there was not one service where people didn't accept Christ as their personal Savior and many were healed. In almost every location I would be asked how many people came to know Jesus 'each week' at my home church. I was embarrassed by the question, and commonly responded that in Canada people have so much that it is hard to convince them of their need for God.

Like with healing, we sometimes don't fully understand what benefits us the most. The lack of substance that many in Ukraine experienced catapulted them into a life of simple faith and trust in God that far surpassed most of the people I know in North America. It seemed that, in every case that I was aware of, God marvelously met their needs. They may not have had all of the excess that we enjoy here in Canada or the United States, but their faith resulted in their needs being met. Ask yourself which is better, lacking material wealth but being dependent on God; or having plenty and not acknowledging our need for God?

This is worthy of note: God was given the name 'Yahweh Jireh', 'God Provides' on Mount Moriah. In context, He wasn't given that Name as the provider of money, food, clothing, or housing. Abraham was challenged to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. God never intended for Him to actually do it. It was a test of Abraham's willingness to obey, and his faith. It was also an object lesson to the world, proving that God would provide a sacrifice for our sins.

This is the end of the story: *"Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.*

11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed

it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." (Genesis 22:11-14)

Abraham gave the Lord the Name: "Jehovah Jireh", 'The Lord will Provide'. As much as we would like to make it about everything else in the world, it was about salvation. The Lord would provide a sacrifice. Of course God can provide whatever it is that we need, but in context it is about the provision of a Saviour; our greatest need.

Another verse that is often quoted about God's provision is **Romans 8:32**. Once again, context is important. "*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*" I can't argue that God is able to give us all things, but look at what the Apostle Paul chooses to emphasize: "*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels

nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:33-39). He emphasizes God’s unlimited willingness to forgive, that nothing can separate us from His love, and that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. Those are the provisions that Paul viewed as worth specifically mentioning. Paul said this of himself, and this may explain his priorities: *“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:12-13).*

We sometimes think differently, but God always prioritizes salvation and spiritual growth.

Can God provide miraculously? Can He cause food to fall from heaven? Can He make water flow from rocks? He did, and He can! My personal belief, however, is that when it comes to provision, God prefers to use people. One of the gifts listed in Romans 12 is the gift of giving. If that is your gift, you may hold in your hands the miracle that someone is praying for. There is a special reward for those who are obedient in being His agent to blessing to others. Paul says that if your gift is giving, give generously (**Romans 12:8**). God wants you to be the sky from which blessings fall. He wants you to be the rock from which water flows. He wants you to be the agent of His blessing. The eternal reward that awaits you is immeasurable.

CONCLUSION

“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”
23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.
24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24).

There is no question that Jesus’ death covered every aspect of the impact of sin. The list is longer than this:

- Healing of sickness and infirmity (**Psalm 41:3**)
- Healing from mental affliction (**Jonah 2:5-7**)
- Healing of spiritual fatigue (**Psalm 23:3**)
- Healing from emotional suffering (**Psalm 147:3**)
- Healing from anxiety or worry (**John 14:27**)
- People living without

His work at Calvary was a complete work. As a result, all of the resources of heaven are available to us. We can expect Healings, miracles, and miraculous provision. Sometimes He provides in a different way than we may expect. Sometimes there are more

important things for Him to take care of in our life on earth than the things we are asking for. Pray with faith. Pray, knowing that God is able. Pray until you get an answer from God.

In the meantime, I can assure you of this: The full benefits of your salvation will be received the day we enter your eternal home. The price has been paid. Your wholeness has been secured. The Apostle John recorded in the book of **Revelation 21:4-7** *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

*5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*⁶ *He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.*

7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”