**Afflicted by an Itch. . .**

**for my Good!**

“Be joyful in hope,

 patient in affliction,

faithful in prayer.”

Romans 12:12 NIV

**By**

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**Dear friend,**

**Purpose**: This short story shows how God used Proverbs 4:20-23 for physical healing when *nothing* else worked. Proverbs 4:20-23 in a nutshell says God’s Word is medicine for our bodies *IF* we take it as He prescribes. Through the experience you will read about, I learned the truth of Psalms 119:67, which says “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey Your Word.” I now say “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” (Psalm 119:71)

This short story was written in May 2020, as four blog posts. Re-reading these blog posts to put together this booklet refreshed and deepened my understanding of how to apply God’s Word to problems. I certainly needed that the past few weeks! I sincerely pray this helps you wield the sword of the Word more effectively in your own daily life.

**The power of God’s Word.** God’s Word never fails. And although *we* often fail, if we obey and love Him with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might (Deuteronomy 6:5), God picks us up and keeps us pressing on toward the prize. Why? He is always watching.

 “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are blameless toward Him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9, AMPC). The NIV says “to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.”

How blessed we are that God only requires whole-hearted commitment, not perfection!

Love and prayers,

Freda, February 2022

**Part One**

**Affliction in body and mind.** “You know, Lord, this is going great! In a few more days, we might get this finished. Thank You!”

I rocked gently in my chair. The softest whisper of wind stirred the branches outside the window. Midmorning sun dappled through the top-most branches. Gentle light illumined some leaves a bright, new grass green, leaving shadowed leaves varying shades of jade.

Holy Spirit and I had worked on this booklet about affliction, which had grown to be a small book, for two months. As I had dug deeply into Isaiah 30, the little book’s Biblical foundation, I had understood more about the message of its working title, “Affliction, God’s Loving Chastening.” The book showed how, through a long season of affliction, God had lovingly healed deep hurts, cleansed me of hidden sins, strengthened me, and made “my feet like hinds’ feet [able to stand firmly or make progress on the dangerous heights of testing and trouble.” (Psalm 18:33, AMPC). A peaceful season of energizing work had followed.

**The dangerous heights of testing and trouble.** But now, today, this morning? Seated at the computer, pressing hard to complete that book, I was again standing in the middle of the dangerous heights of testing and trouble.

I paused, lifted the dove gray cotton tank top and frowned at the pink, raised dots covering my tummy. I wriggled my shoulders, resisting the urge to scratch, scratch, scratch the same kind of dots sprinkled over my sides and back. The fan on the bookshelf, which served as a cubby atop my writing table, faithfully whirred. On the other side of the room, the white-shaded lamp cast ovals of light into the corner and onto the vase of white plastic roses and pipe cleaner flowers, the most recent treasure from my two grandsons. Worship music lilted from the radio next to the vase.

I turned my attention to the rash, and, just like that, stepped into the snare of worry.

**The snare of worry.** “What if it gets worse and the doctor’s office is closed?” I pondered. “This is Friday, nearly noon. Maybe I should call and try to get a walk-in appointment.”

I took the keyboard out of my lap, the ergonomically correct typing position I so carefully used, and stood up. I took three steps and opened the refrigerator, wishing I could just step into its coolness. I was beginning to feel hot and flushed and irritated.

I sat back down, pulled the keyboard back into my lap, popped two cold red grapes into my mouth, and tried to focus on the computer screen. No good. I ran my hands through my hair, grown longer than usual during the coronavirus lockdown, and sighed deeply.

“I just don’t know what to do!” I muttered to myself, tightening the enemy’s snare of worry even more firmly around my mind.

“Things have been going so well! I just cannot handle this. What am I doing to do? It might go away. It might just be heat rash. But what if it is not? I had that anaphylactic reaction a few months ago. What if this rash gets really bad? What if my immune system is hypersensitive now?”

I stood up again, crossed the room to the rocker by the window, and picked up my Bible. Instead of sitting down and reading it, though, I just stood and stared out the window. Another sigh. Another hand-swipe at the hair prickling at face and neck. My whole body felt irritated.

“This reminds me of when I was deep in the depression and walked around the house, starting one thing after another and finishing nothing!” I fumed to myself.

**The poisonous arrows of lies.** Now that the enemy had me immobilized in the noose of worry, he began shooting poisonous arrows of lies. The spiritual skirmish continued.

“If I am staying close to God and doing all I can to serve Him and help others, why doesn’t He keep me healthy? Why did He allow this rash? And on top of a whole week of terrible indigestion and bloating I can’t figure out either! It is just not fair. And maybe I will keep getting more unhealthy. I am, after all, an older person now. What if I get sicker and sicker and . . .”

Finally, pulling myself out of the tailspin, I called and, thankfully, got an appointment. At three o’clock, after the most cursory of questions from the doctor, I sat in line for the drive-through window of the pharmacy. At home, I read the directions, flinched at the thought of taking more medicine, especially such a strong one as Prednisolone, and, after a long rest on the couch, sat back down at the computer, searching out more information on foods and allergies and --- rashes!

**More confusion!** Confusion mushroomed as I read that, apparently, some heart-healthy foods I had consumed in large quantity lately—cruciferous vegetables, onions, garlic, and turmeric—could cause allergic reactions and digestive issues. Ugggh!

“What am I going to do?” I fairly screamed inside. “I itch, I have this rash, and everything I have put in my mouth today has made me burp like an ugly old toad!”

The family trait of stubbornness, however, kicked in. An hour later, after more internet browsing, I drove to the local farmer’s market grocery, list of foods that helped allergies and indigestion in hand. Plump blackberries, on sale for five dollars a tiny basket, went into the cart. Without looking at the price, I yanked up a bag of cherries and tossed them in. Next came blueberries, out-of-season slices of watermelon, and almond yogurt, at the exorbitant price of five dollars per container. I shook my head at the cash register total, feeling my shoulders slump over.

“I can’t afford this pricey stuff all the time,” I thought as I slumped my way back to the car in the dusk. The air smelled hot and too dry. Streetlights would soon come on, and I needed to be home, eating supper at my regimented two-hour-before-lying-down-soasto-prevent indigestion hour.

**Trying to but failing to feel God’s presence.** I drove home, dragged my itchy self and my bulging mesh bags up the stairs, had some blackberries and almond yogurt, then propped upright on the couch for an hour, listening to the worship music from the radio in the corner, trying to but failing to feel God’s presence.

“Still more frustration,” I muttered to myself as I turned off the lights and plodded to the bedroom. Mental exhaustion led to troubled, restless, and late-in-coming sleep.

Saturday, the next morning, I could not feel His presence in my morning devotional time either, as I thanked Him that the rash seemed a good bit better. Sighing, I returned to searching the computer, trying to figure out what else to eat besides high-priced food.

In the list of “Six common food allergens that cause itchy skin” was nuts, including walnuts, a handful of which I had faithfully ate each day to lower cholesterol, and almonds, which I consumed in the almond milk I drank so as to avoid asthma-irritating dairy.

I leaned over, rested my head in my hands, then got up and slammed myself onto the couch.

“Was the almond yogurt bad for me too? What else was I eating that might have caused the rash and indigestion?”

 **Twang! Whoosh, whoosh, thunk!** Twang! Whoosh, whoosh, thunk! went the arrows of the enemy, hitting the target of my mind and heart.

Twang! Whoosh, whoosh, thunk! went the arrow of self-pity.

“I have tried so hard to be healthy, all my life, and now this!”

I stood up, half hobbling back to the computer.

“And now the stinking virus has kept me and everyone else out of the gym and my joints ache, every muscle I had is getting soft, and my feet are getting stiffer without the swim exercises.”

Through all of that, even as the panic rose, I kept trying to connect with God.

“Thank You, Lord, that I got  in to see a doctor on such short notice. Thank You that the rash seems to be better this morning. Thank You that I have the money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Thank You that I know You are faithful and that all You do is good.”

I took the afternoon blood pressure medicine I had taken for ten years and sat down to work on the book about affliction. Blissfully, the peace I always felt when writing with the Lord descended.

Ten minutes later, I paused, lifted my shirt and closed my eyes against the pressure of tears. The rash was bright pink again.

**What am I supposed to do, Lord?** “What am I supposed to do, Lord? I have to take the Amlodipine? People have strokes when their blood pressure is too high!”

**Part Two**

** Helpless, right where God wants us**. “Oh, Lord!” I wailed as I looked at the pink spots that had reappeared so fast. “I know my little problems are nothing compared to what millions face every day, but Lord! What if the blood pressure medicine causes a rash, too?”

I rocked in my desk chair a few moments, thinking. Could the medicines I took, over the counter and by prescription, have caused the rash? In coping with Austin’s multiple allergens, I now took three over-the-counter pills each morning and later in the day, depending on symptoms. Lately, worsening asthma had scared me into using the inhaler twice a day.

 Thoughts whirred through my mind like the balsa wood airplanes my brothers and I had flown in the back yard, the deluxe ones with a rubber-band, windup propeller that made the little plane zip erratically over our heads for a few seconds before plummeting into lush Bermuda.

Finally, I sat in the rocker by the window, opened my Bible to Psalms, read a few minutes, then prayed.

“Father, I give up. I do not know which medicines and which foods are bad for me. I do not want to try another doctor or medicine and I am getting really scared. I need Your help, Lord. I believe Your promises in Hebrews 13:5 that You will never in any way fail me. I believe, Father, but I am so sorry. Even after all You have done for me, I am still afraid. Help me trust You more and show me what You want me to do.”

**God always, always, always hears and answers us.** Fortunately, I knew God would help, even though I felt the sting of fiery darts of discouragement and doubt. I had lifted up my shield of faith the best I could and I made up my mind to learn to continue living a life of active, intentional gratitude to Him, no matter what physical troubles might lay ahead.

Still itching, resisting the urge to scratch, I said, “Well, Lord, as a love offering for all the miracles You have done all my life, let’s pick up where we left off on that little book about affliction. Thank You so much for giving me this work to do. Help me write what You want people to know and teach me as we write.”

I sat down at the computer, opened the file labelled “Affliction, God’s Loving Chastening” and read the last two sentences I had written five days ago, before the storm of physical afflictions.

“During those two years, as I actively sought help and healing for the increasing emotional upset, I read and heard many teachings by Joyce Meyer, Derek Prince, and others who taught about using God’s Word like the medicine it is to heal and renew your heart.”

**God’s Medicine Bottle.** “Lord, I need to review that teaching and add more detail, right?” An internet search, to my delight, showed that Derek Prince’s little book “God’s Medicine Bottle,” was in the radio archives of [www.derekprince.org](http://www.derekprince.org/). The short, but mighty, book taught how to receive healing from the Word of God, based on Proverbs 4:20-22.

For the next hour I barely moved, listening intently to each word, grateful that God had answered my desperate prayer in less than three minutes. Here is a brief summary of that teaching.

While a solider, Derek had severe eczema, like many British soldiers exposed to desert sun and sand. Doctors’ efforts failed, and Derek was left, along with others, to sit in the hospital. A relatively new believer, with nowhere else to turn for help but God and the Word, he began studying his Bible. One day, he read Proverbs 4:20-22.

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto My sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (KJV)

In the margin of his Bible, Derek saw that an alternative translation for “health” in verse 22 was “medicine”. After repeatedly pondering that passage, he decided to take God’s Word as his medicine. Then God told him clearly, though not audibly, “When the doctor gives a person medicine, the directions for taking it are on the bottle. . . This is My medicine I’m giving you. The directions are on the bottle. You better study them.” (p. 16, God’s Medicine Bottle)

Following is a summary of Derek’s understanding of the four directions, as given in “God’s Medicine Bottle’.

1. *Attend to My words.* God requires our undivided attention as we study His Word.
2. *Incline thine ear unto My sayings.* Bend down your head, bow down your stiff neck and listen, humbly, as you study. Let go ALL preconceptions of how God does and does not work. Do not try to figure things out.
3. *Let them not depart from thine eye.* The main thought here is to focus and have a single or simple, sincere eye—to see the Bible as it is written and take it as meaning what it says, without trying to explain it away.
4. *Keep them in the midst of thine heart.* Just as some medicine must enter the bloodstream to be effective, God’s medicine must enter the heart, which is what God’s first three were about. Further, Proverbs 4:23 can be simply stated “Guard your heart with all of our strength; for all the things in life come out of it.” (p. 52) God says that for His Words and His medicine to do what is promised, we must keep His words and sayings in the center place of our life and heart.

Finally, Hebrews 4:12 teaches that God’s Word **penetrates** when nothing else will – not a surgeon’s knife nor a counselor’s words.

Derek began bowing his head over the Bible three times each day after meals, which was how people usually took medicine. Within a year, he was totally healthy in every area of his body.

** Ruth “happened” to stop in the field of Boaz.** After I listened to the entire teaching about God’s medicine, came a deep, peaceful sigh. “Thank You, Father, for speaking so clearly. I know that just as Ruth “. . . happened to stop in the part of the field belonging to Boaz” (Ruth 2:3, AMP) so, at this particular hour, I *happened* to resume our work on the book about affliction at the spot about using the Word like medicine. You  knew that would get me to sit down and listen—attentively--to the entire teaching again."

“*This, dear, dear Father, is a new thing for me this taking the Word like medicine, although I have always believed that all Your gifts, including healing, are still in operation today, just as in New Testament times. Thank You that you taught me how to use Your Word like the spiritual weapon it is to heal depression and anxiety. Now I need You to teach me how to take it like the medicine it is for physical healing.*

*Forgive me, oh Father, for relying on doctors and medicines for healing first, all my life, even after learning about Your healing powers. I have been like the Israelites in Isaiah 30 that we are writing about in the affliction book. They spent all their wealth purchasing help from Egypt instead of seeking strength and protection from You, and consequently they were terrified of and fled from their enemies, just as I have fled from my fear of sickness, rather than standing and leaning on You.*

*And just as You told them that You eagerly waited, expecting, looking and longing to be gracious to them, and that You lifted yourself up so that You could show them lovingkindness, so You have been eagerly waiting for me to return to You and rest in You so that I can be saved from these afflictions of my body. You have been longing for me to return to You and learn to gain strength from being quiet and from having trust and confidence in You. (from Isaiah 30:18, AMPC)”*

*I* knew that God was showing me the next area of personal growth for me--depending on Him for physical healing.

**How quickly we forget!** I also knew, just as certainly, that He was chastening me about keeping the Word first in my life. In recent weeks, working on the book about affliction had been so exciting that I had, too often, kept writing rather than doing the personal Bible reading and study I knew was necessary for me personally.

Also, God’s presence during the writing so nourished and excited my soul and left such an afterglow that I did not feel the need to quote my basic Bible passages to myself during the in between moments of daily living, as I had done when God was healing me of depression and anxiety. I had also neglected to my commitment to discover and meditate on new Bible passages.

*“Forgive me, Father! You warned me. I heard more than one Bible teacher and pastor whose ministry had steadily grown for years and who had not yielded to the sin that wrecked so many well-known ministries attribute their success to maintaining their personal relationship with You. I also knew many saints whose ministries, though behind the scenes nevertheless equally important in the kingdom, had lived long, victorious lives because they put their relationship with You above any work they did for You.*

*Thank You, Lord, for exposing the ways of the enemy in this. I see that he tries to draw every believer away from the most important thing in life, as You said in Matthew 22:37-39 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (NIV). I know that good can be the enemy of the best. If I spend so much time in my personal work for You that I neglect my time with You and our Bible study, I have stepped off the path You have for me. Nothing can come before You.*

*Is that the lesson of Mary and Martha, Lord, in Luke 10:38-42? I feel like I never understood that story before. Wow!”*

I paused. How wonderful, I thought, that God takes such care with His children to show them exactly how to live! And just as clearly as if we heard a human voice. (Isaiah 30:21-23) How wonderful that He does not criticize us when we fail and that He never embarrasses us when we need to ask Him how to do something. (James 1:5-8).

**God warns us not to forget.** On impulse, I searched “how quickly we forget” and found Deuteronomy 4:9, “Only take heed and guard your life diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your [mind and] heart all the days of your life. Teach them to your children and your children’s children” (AMPC). I knew from having seen pictures that phylacteries were worn during prayer, and that they were highly visible. I also knew, from, pictures that putting them on took time and effort. God obviously wanted His children to think deeply about His Word when they prayed.

For the next few minutes, I skimmed through the first part of Deuteronomy, from Chapter Four on, noting how many times God warned Israel, through Moses, to keep His law FIRST in their hearts and minds, passages like Deuteronomy 4:10, 39-40,5:7, 6:1-25, especially 3, 12 and 24. I would study that out later. The passages in Deuteronomy reminded me of Psalm 107, which tells how God, because of His mercy and loving kindness, again and again rescued rebellious Israel when they rejected Him and His holy ways.

My tummy rumbled, and I drew my attention back to my prayer of repentance for neglecting His Word. I concluded “*And, Lord, I trust You to show me what foods to eat that will help heal whatever is out of balance.*”

**God is very near to us in everything about which we call upon Him.** *“. . . who has a god so near to them as the Lord our God is to us in all things for which we call upon Him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7, AMPC).* I walked to the fridge, opened the door, and felt led to eat some spinach. I had read months ago that, paradoxical as it seems, spinach and other leafy greens help the tummy. (In writing this story, I learned that its alkalinity makes it an excellent antacid.) The spinach stayed down, with no burping.

I returned to the farmer’s market grocery that evening, thinking I could try another kind of yogurt instead of one based on soy or almonds. Sure enough, coconut yogurt and some other kinds existed, but at far too high a cost for my regular consumption. Walking out of the store, holding my empty mesh bags, I prayed, “Lord, thank You for guiding me. Help me remember and show me how You want me to take Your Word like medicine. Please keep showing me how to do that. And I think You are saying to try fresh vegetables and fruits that help allergies and asthma. It makes sense that eating foods that You have supplied in nature would be part of Your way of healing.”

As I walked up the stairs, I ignored the dizzy, light-headed feeling, assuming the blood pressure was a bit off, as it often was by day’s end. I fell asleep that night, repeating my basic arsenal of Scripture passages, Isaiah 26:3, Hebrews 13:5, Psalm 91 . . . zzzz

P.S. I ***heartily*** recommend the teachings of Derek Prince, a widely-known and highly respected international Bible teacher. Though he went home to glory in 2003, his teachings are still going forth through the work of his family and others, through many avenues, including [www.derekprince.org](http://www.derekprince.org/). Sound Biblical teaching can easily be found, on innumerable topics, through searching the website and other resources, including putting, for example, “Derek Prince on healing” into your web browser. You will be abundantly blessed as you feast on solid food. (Hebrews 5:14).

**Part Three**

**Hmm. . . taking the Word like medicine. . .** The next day’s morning routine went slower than usual. I still itched, though not as much. Dizziness forced me to sit down in between feeding Barny, brewing chamomile tea, giving Barny his morning catnip, brushing him, and morning devotions.

“Oh well, Barn,” I said as I stroked the sleek mink-colored fur along his sides, “Maybe it’s the blood pressure. Maybe it is just too low. Should I try some caffeine?”

I picked him up, held him close, and nuzzled my face into the cream-colored fur of his neck, breathing in the clean, animal smell.

“Yowww,” was his soft reply. I placed him gently on the floor and walked, slowly, to the rocker by the window.

After morning devotions, which included skimming “God’s Medicine Bottle”, I sat at the computer and resumed proof-reading “Affliction, God’s Loving Chastening.” With decades of office experience typing medical dictation, proof-reading letters, memos and reports my supervisors had written, then a few years writing minutes for the Board of County Commissioners and proofing my own minutes as well as those of other recording secretaries, and finally, after five years of evening classes, writing, editing and proofing my own emails, reports, and articles in professional journals, I could proof-read on automatic pilot, leaving my mind fairly free to think.

So, as I whacked an occasional unnecessary word here and deleted an extra space there in my little manuscript, I pondered. And I asked God, ““Lord, what does ‘taking Your Word like medicine’ mean for me, personally? How am I to do that? I paused. “Well. I know You used Your Word to heal my heart of depression and fear, so maybe the process of physical healing is similar?”

**Healing began with getting the Word into my mind and heart.** “Okay, Lord. I know healing started when I began doing two things. One, diligently studying your Word, for myself, in my areas of personal need, and, two, when I began memorizing those verses that You highlighted for me as I studied.

**Healing through diligent study of the Word.** I kept thinking about how God had changed my approach to and attitude about the Word the previous year, 2019, when so much healing had happened. Although I had studied my Bible diligently, actually frantically, as a new believer there were seasons when my passion for the Word dimmed. Periodically, for a few years at a time, I put the Word higher in my priorities but never like I had as a spiritual newborn. The last five years or so I had read and studied the Word less and less, compared to previous times. As for meditation, that had been shallow and sporadic, throughout my life.

I prayed, “Forgive me, Lord, oh forgive me! And thank You for using the depression and fear to show me that I live only by every Word that comes out of Your mouth, Lord, as You say in Deuteronomy 8:3, not by things of this world. Oh, how I regret not listening to You, Holy Spirit! Thank You for Your patience.”

“Thank You, Lord, for all those winter and spring mornings last year, when I first began sitting at the desk, taking notes, like I was in school again. It felt so lonely, with both grandchildren in school, but as I sat with You, morning sunshine slanting through the blinds, You led me to look up verses on fear and courage and peace and worry and fretting and Your love and care and provision and protection. You led me to read the whole chapters those verses were in, to look up cross references, and take notes like I was studying for a final exam. Thank You, Lord, for teaching me how to feast from the meat of the Word directly like that, rather than being fed by others. Thank You for helping me do my best to correctly handle the Word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15.)

I paused and sat very still as I pondered upon the second way His word had healed my spirit and soul of depression and anxiety, by hiding the Word in my heart. (Psalm 119:11)

 **Healing through Memorizing. ”**You remember, Lord! With Your help, and Your Spirit giving me the desire to do it (Phillippians 2:13), we memorized verses about peace, like Isaiah 26:3, and verses where You promised to take care of and be close to Your children, like Genesis 28:15 and Isaiah 41:10. I copied the verses by hand, using the Amplified Bible, and I carried those pages of Scripture everywhere, each day, wherever I went, as one carries a lucky charm, almost frantically pulling them out while standing in line at the grocery, while riding the recumbent cycle at the gym – any time my mind was not engaged in some task or conversation – because when I pondered Your Word, I had peace. But when my mind was idle, fear and viscous self-criticism flooded in.

“It took many weeks to memorize our basic arsenal of Scriptures, but through that I know You did indeed make my mind new, Lord, because I think and feel and act differently. Keeping Your Word in my mind changed me into a new person by changing the way I think, like You tell us in Romans 12:1-3.

“I know, Lord, that keeping Your Word in my mind so many hours of the day as I worked to memorize was a big factor in Your making my mind new.” Then I thought about meditation.

**Healing through Meditating.** “Lord, memorizing from the Amplified was a form of meditating, wasn’t it? Or at least a good start?” I knew meditating meant to roll an idea over and over in your mind, to reflect upon it, and to ruminate upon it, to work on that piece of the Bread of Life as a cow works on its food, to mash and tear and grind and analyze, then let it rest and do it all over until it is broken down small enough so the body can absorb it. Maybe repeating verses phrase by phrase, over and over was one way of breaking down the Bread into small enough pieces so my mind could absorb it, just as a cow chewed and crushed her food until her body could absorb it!

“Wow, Lord! I was taking Your Word like medicine, just like You told Derek to do! I was giving Your Word my undivided, diligent attention, desperation did give me an open, believing heart, and I did keep Your Words in the middle of my life, all day long, as a shield against the arrows of fear and sadness and hopelessness. That was why Your Word penetrated and did its healing work!

“Was that the “secret”, Lord, of how You healed my mind and emotions of depression? Had I, unknowingly, done it right? I had studied as hard as I could to understand Your teachings, then I had been meditating on them while I memorized them, and—Wow!!-- they had penetrated my heart because all that time I was “whetting and sharpening them”, just like You tell us to do in Deuteronomy 6:7.

“Did healing come because Your Word pierced the depths of my heart, because it penetrated to “. . . the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal spirit], and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature]” (Hebrews 4:12, AMPC). Derek Prince said Your Word penetrates when a surgeon’s scalpel and a counselor’s words fail. Like a surgeon’s sharp scalpel penetrates flesh and bone, is that how the sharpened sword of Your Word penetrates to where our soul and spirit meet, to our innermost being?

As I sat in my chair, hands frozen on the keyboard, hindsight said that for most of my walk with God, in regard to His command to meditate on the Word daily, I had been like the man in James who, though hearing the Word and seeing what he looks like, as in a mirror, goes away and immediately forgets. Over the years, Holy Spirit had gently reminded me that I was not meditating and had done so only briefly when a new believer. However, fully as prideful as King Saul, I had not listened to God and had persisted in my own way, reading several chapters a day, studying sporadically, and feeling that was okay or good enough.

I kept sitting quietly, tilting the chair back and forth with one foot on the floor, listening, waiting for more thoughts from the Lord. The fan whirred, cool air blew on my neck as the air conditioner ka-plunked on. Barny stood up and yawned, revealing pink gums and that tiny, pale pink, sandpaper tongue. I rubbed my thumb and index finger together, waiting in the silence.

**Is this how meditation works?** “Hmm,” I reflected. ”I need to look at that verse, not just repeat it in my mind.” I opened my Amplified to Hebrews 4:12,

“For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and the [immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.” (AMPC)

   “Ok Lord, I sense there is something more here about penetrating our heart that I do not see yet. Let’s break that down, phrase by phrase. . . so, if we sharpen Your Word by meditating on it (Deuteronomy 6:7, AMPC), then it will separate, or split asunder as the King James puts it, our soul and spirit AND it also separates our joints and marrow, the deepest parts of our nature. Then it exposes, sifts, analyzes and judges our heart. So, Your Word penetrates to the dividing line between:

* the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit
* Your Word also penetrates between joints and marrow (which are the deepest parts of our nature),
* and Your Word exposes, sifts, analyzes, and judges the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.

So, for example, when I was deeply depressed, my *soul* would have been thinking “There is no hope for me. This will never change. No one can fix my messed up heart and life. God is disappointed in me because I have gotten depressed again.”

But, after weeks of reading, and speaking, and thinking what Your Word says about these things, Your Word got all the way through, divided my soul and spirit, then did those four things. Your Word, alive in my innermost being:

* exposed the darkness,
* sifted out the lies, as a gardener sifts rocks out of soil or a baker sifts lumps out of floor,
* analyzed, or examined in detail, my soul and spirit, and
* judged the thoughts and purposes in my heart.

 Hmmm, how did the Word judge? A judge in a courtroom hears and examines evidence, then declares a person guilty or innocent and sets them free or sends them to jail. When I judge something I call it good or bad and then, if I have the authority, I throw out the bad and keep the good, like picking through cracked pecans or walnuts.

So! Your Word in my heart exposed, sifted, analyzed and then judged the lies the enemy had planted for what they are, and banished them by replacing them with Truth.

* Where I had thought “There is no hope for me”, the truth of Your Word in my heart judged that a lie, and Jeremiah 29:11 told me You had good plans for me, including a future and a hope.
* Where I had thought. “No one can fix my messed up heart and life,” the truth of Your Word in my heart judged that a lie, and Isaiah 41:10 told me not to be afraid because You are my God and You will strengthen and help me and hold me up.
* Where I had thought You were disappointed and mad with me because I was depressed again, Your Word in my heart judged that a lie, and Psalm 103 told me You loved me as high as the heavens are above the earth and that You had compassion on me, just as a father has compassion on his children.

I had known those verses but had not sharpened them by meditation, so they were, in my hands, a dull blade, an ineffective sword that did not penetrate to the dividing line of soul and spirit. But, diligent study, memorization, and meditation sharpened them for me personally so that they did indeed penetrate, like a scalpel, to the root of the lies that had caused depression and fear and had cut them out.

That was how the Word had healed depression and fear. Truth had set me free and as I kept the Word in my heart it had kept me free and enabled me to walk and live in truth so that gradually my habitual attitude was hopeful, peaceful, and confident that God would help me rebuild our life, and I felt deeply loved all “just” by hearing and believing the Truth.

 I stared out the window a long time, simply thanking God for the healing and for helping me understand, at least partly, how the Word worked healing in the heart.

“Thank You, Lord, I understand emotional and mental healing better now, but what about physical healing? How do I take Your Word like medicine for that? And please help with this dizziness. I think it is getting worse. I love You, Lord, and I trust You. Thank You that You have done such a healing in my heart and blessed me in countless ways. Help me honor You in all things. You are so good to me, Father! I love You!"

**Part Four**

**Confusion leads to more confusion.** In spite of the dizziness, I continued editing the manuscript, adding a comma here and removing an extra space, all the while pondering, “What does taking Your Word like medicine look like for me, Lord?” Still without an answer, I decided to review the basic passages I had memorized that had healed the depression and fear, my arsenal as I called it. I walked to the side table by the rocker and, underneath a yellow note pad, two devotionals and one Bible, found the nine sheet-protected pages binder-clipped at the left top corner. I reviewed each phrase of Isaiah 26:3, in the Amplified, until I could once again, as I had in previous weeks, repeat the entire verse to myself.

After lunch and an hour of lying down, trying to ignore the itching, I again returned to the manuscript, hoping to keep my mind off “the” problem. Instead, the buzzing whir of questions and fears intensified.

“Should I just stop the Prednisone? What if it is like an antibiotic and you are not supposed to. But it has not helped the itch that much, and I am not that dizzy. Well, I guess I am. Oh, what should I do?”

Then “Zing!” The enemy shot one of the poison-tipped arrows he uses against single believers. “Well, everything is so hard for you because you are alone. If you just had a husband, this would not be so hard.”

“Hmmph!” I said to myself, as I leaned forward, elbows on knees, gently pressing my temples. “Lord, as You say in Isaiah 54, You are my Creator and You are my husband. You are the LORD of heaven’s armies. You rule the entire earth. I will trust in You because I know You have always rescued me, and I know You love me. (Psalm 91)

 **Trust brings clarity.** Then came the clear thought, “Just call the pharmacist.” So, I did. She said, “Just stop taking it if it makes you dizzy.” I slid off the couch onto the floor, burying my face into the bumpy softness of corduroy cushions.

“Thank You, Lord, thank You!” Tears darkened an irregular circle in the cocoa-colored fabric of the couch.

“This is how I have handled sickness my entire life, isn’t it, Lord, even after I knew You? When I think I am catching a cold, I take two kinds of cold medicine, or more, to control the symptoms. Years ago when I was a runner, I tried orthotics, taping my arches, different shoes, extra stretching, strength training and everything else to “fix” my feet so I could keep running like I wanted to. When allergies began a few years ago, I began taking medicine every single day. Oh, sure, I prayed, and asked others to pray. I learned to anoint myself with oil, and to make declarations of health. But I was always trusting in something doctors could do or that I could do for healing.

And, Lord, I think I was afraid to trust You with my body. I panicked when I felt sick, and in the fog of panic, listened to the all or nothing lies of the enemy, lies like, ‘This is the start of a terrible sickness. You will not be able to work or do anything. You will be miserable. You must fix this now. Call a doctor. Get some medicine – quick! Hurry! You are in danger.”

I doubted You would really heal me. Forgive me, Father. I am so sorry. How could I have been so blind and doubted You so long? That must have deeply grieved Your heart when I subconsciously doubted Your love for me. It would be like Sharon thinking I was keeping good things away, when I did everything a single parent could possibly do.

I know from Your Word, Lord, that life is filled with troubles and You say rejoice because You have overcome this world. Yet, I also know that because we live in a fallen world we will have sicknesses and other afflictions of the flesh.”

With hips beginning to ache, I got up off the floor and sat on the couch. Sunlight blazed white off the blinds and dispersed into long slats on the oak veneer floor. The thump, thump, thump then slam as my upstairs neighbor returned home interrupted the squawk of a blue jay swaying on the branch outside the window.

**Trusting God first and using natural remedies.** “Lord, obviously You are telling me to have more faith and to take Your Word like medicine. The only way I know to do that is refreshing my basic memory verses and adding more. I trust You, Lord, for more direction about how to use your Word like medicine. But I also think maybe I should just try natural remedies. I know people in Bible times used olive oil and other natural products for healing.”

Yesterday, my friend had texted to try ice packs and calamine lotion. Well, I disliked ice intensely and, although I had purchased calamine, it sat in the bag on the counter where I dropped it beside my purse when I returned home.

Now, I pulled an ice pack out of the freezer and winced as I applied it. In only a few moments, the itching began decreasing. I sat in the bathroom, gratefully relocating the ice pack to the itchiest spots. Next, I applied a thin layer of calamine lotion. In thirty minutes, the rash was nearly indistinguishable and the itch? Nonexistent.

“Thank You, thank You, thank You, Lord!” I kept repeating, as if I had just been pulled out of a raging river. “I appreciate it! That feels so much better.”

A few minutes later, my tummy growled. The enemy of our souls growled, too, seeking to steal, kill, and destroy. (John 10:10) However, this time, with a more sober mind and greater alertness to God’s voice, I resisted him and stood strong in my faith.

“Lord, You are healing the rash. The tummy upsets are no harder for You to heal. Nothing is too hard for You, as You say in Jeremiah 32:27. Please show me what to eat.”

In the refrigerator, I saw my two-day home-made chicken and vegetable soup, glad now that I had not thrown it out. When the itch and tummy upsets began simultaneously two days ago, I thought too much turmeric might have been the cause. For the last few weeks supper had been that soup with lots of onion and garlic and a big dose of turmeric, in a desperate effort to “fix” worsening allergies.

**One problem, many messages.** The small bowl of soup I ate settled just fine, no burping, no gas, no bloating. While washing the soup bowl, spoon, and the morning’s oatmeal bowl, another gentle thought came. “Large meals also cause GI problems.” It was not only too spicey soup. It was having two large bowls, as well as the rest of supper, then later a large bedtime snack, rationalizing I needed it to fall asleep. And, to be honest, self-pity often surfaced as I faced the night alone. A treat made me feel better, even though I knew lying down after eating often led to hiatal hernias, which often causes digestive problems.

Other thoughts flooded in about changes I needed to make for my health. I had gained ten pounds during the coronavirus lockdown because I whined that the gym was closed and I could not do my usual exercises. That had led to feeling stove-up, as my Dad used to say, and stiffer than I ever had. Bedtime had become irregular and too late, which led to arising after sunup, therefore missing the pre-dawn writing time that worked like a tonic every day.

**Loving chastening, for my good.** With deep gratitude, I saw that God had used the health problems for my good. They had taught me to depend on Him first for healing and to adjust some health habits. That would help me finish my years with good health, able to write and serve others, which was my heart’s desire.

 **A successful maiden voyage of a little ship of faith.** Two days later, a bad earache helped exercise my new level of faith. As the right ear throbbed, I pulled my hair back and looked in the mirror. The outer edge of the canal was swollen and red.

“Oh, Lord!” was my initial thought. “Ears are really serious. How can I mess around with my ear?” But I prayed, with my mustard seed of faith (Luke 17:6), looked up natural remedies, applied ice packs and tea tree ointment (which fortunately was in the house already), sat on the couch and reviewed four more Scriptures in my arsenal until I could again recite them. After an hour or so came a measure of relief, and I went to bed, propped up to reduce fluid in the area. By midday the next day, the ear was remarkably better. Praise God! I knew healing did not always come so fast but, praise God and His great grace, it had this time!

I knew not to stop the blood pressure medicine but I could certainly make an, uh, honest effort to lose weight and exercise regularly again. Hmmm. . . maybe this could be a way to learn about long-term healing. Hmmm . . .

**This light and momentary trouble (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)** Regarding problems, perhaps there are a few basic lessons we believers learn—once we really learn them-- and then spend the rest of life applying those lessons, by God’s grace alone, in new situations. I believe some of those lessons are:

[1] God is sovereign. (Psalm 113:1-6, Jeremiah 32:17)

[2] He loves us more than we can know this side of heaven. (John 3:16, Psalm 103)

[3] Everything He does and that He allows He will use for our ultimate good and the good of the Kingdom. (Romans 8:28, James 1:3-4, Genesis 50:20)

[4] He uses hard times to train us, and He does it because of His great love for us. (Hebrews 12:1-12, James 1:2-17)

[5] When we stray, He does whatever is necessary to woo us back to His loving heart and His safe pathways. (Luke 15, Psalm 107)



[6] He will sustain us through any and everything, as we put our trust in Him. (Isaiah 26:3, I Peter 5:6-11)

7] He died to give us an abundant life, on earth as well as in heaven, and it is His will that we live with love, joy, and peace each day. He will enable us to do that as we obey and trust Him. (John 3:16, John 10:10, Philippians 2:13).

**God’s timing is perfect – ALL the time.** That evening . . . “Lord, it is so funny how You hide things beneath all these books and writing papers until I have learned a particular lesson. When I first read “God’s Medicine Bottle”, I understood that Derek Prince taught that ***IF*** we give focused, reverent, and believing attention to Your Word, that Your Word will be medicine to us. But I somehow forgot how he said to take Your Word like medicine, so when I asked You I felt led to refresh my basic arsenal of memorized Scriptures, to add more Scriptures, and to meditate on Your Word even more all day long.

And now tonight, re-reading the book, I found where Derek said he “took” the medicine of Your Word by reading it three times a day, after meals, as you take other medicine.

So Lord, I am thinking this reading three times a day should be separate from other Bible study and reading, something I do specifically to seek Your healing. So, I think we should start

with . . .

The End

**Postscript:** Below is an exposition of 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, the central truth in this little story which first appeared in the form of four blog posts in the early summer of 2020. I am adding this postscript as I compiled the blog posts into one document. I have learned much more about affliction since the summer of 2020 when the story above was written. Through it all, God has always, always, always brought good out of it! I pray you have the same view of your own trials.

Such an attitude, I have learned, takes much of the sting out of the “troubles, trials, distress, and frustration” Jesus said we would have in this present world but about which He says we can rejoice because He has “overcome the world and deprived it of power to harm” us. (John 16:33, AMPC).

**Comfort in affliction . . . treasure in jars of clay.** The first four chapters of Paul’s second letter to the believers at Corinth show why and how Paul triumphed over afflictions.

2 Corinthians opens with Paul praising God for giving him comfort in his afflictions so that he (Paul) could share that comfort. Paul says it is “our” lot to experience suffering, just as Jesus and His disciples did, but that his (Paul’s) troubles turn out for the Corinthians’ good when the Corinthians “patiently endure the same evils (misfortunes and calamites) that” Paul suffered. (2 Corinthians 1:6, AMPC)

**Pressures make us depend on God.** Paul wants the believers at Corinth to know that the pressures he endured made him “despair even of life” but that the pressures happened so that he would depend not on himself, but on “God Who raises the dead.” Paul says he joyfully and confidently expects that God will again deliver him, while the Corinthians help him by their prayers.

Paul reminds them of his holiness and sincerity toward them, then he speaks of his love for them, instructs them in the right attitude toward believers who have sinned, and explains that the new covenant, of which he is a minister, gives life and transforms us into the likeness of Christ.

**The transforming power of the truth about ourselves.** Notice that Paul says we are transformed: ***“[because*** *we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.” (*3:18, AMPC.) It is steadily gazing into the instructive, revelatory mirror of the Word and changing our actions accordingly—as we would wipe away smudges and adjust unruly hair when looking into an actual mirror--that makes us more like Jesus. (James 1:22-25)

**No discouragement!** Then comes a “therefore” in the first verse of Chapter Four. Paul says that because the Corinthians were all are being made more Christ-like, he engages in his ministry by God’s mercy, without discouragement. He does not become “spiritless and despondent with fear, or become faint with weariness and exhaustion” (4:1b, AMPC) The opportunity to minister to the Corinthians keeps Paul encouraged!

This “therefore” in verse one begins a short discourse the NIV labels “Treasure in Jars of Clay.” In this discourse, Paul explains that even though the gospel is veiled to “those who are perishing” (because Satan has blinded their minds so that they cannot see the “illuminating light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ,”), Paul preaches “Jesus Christ as Lord” and he, Paul, their servant for Jesus’ sake. Paul says that that preaching lets the light of God (which God had put into his heart) shine forth and illuminates the truth about God as that truth is revealed in Jesus.

**The precious treasure of the lifegiving Light of the Gospel.** In verse seven, Paul returns to the theme of our inevitable suffering as humans when he says “However, “we possess this precious treasure [the divine Light of the Gospel] in [frail, human] vessels of earth”. And why? So “*that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be of God and not from ourselves”.*

Paul next affirms that the pressure and persecutions he endures are revealing the life of Jesus in him. When he is being handed over to all these hardships, to “death” in other words, it is so that the “life of Jesus also may be evidenced through his (Paul’s) flesh which is liable to death.



Paul says all these things are happening for the sake of the Corinthians and also so that more grace may be extended to more people and thus more thanksgiving will increase and will contribute to the glory of God.

**Why Paul never gave up.** Then, Paul says “Therefore”—because of all I just told you—

“. . . That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits arebeing renewed every day. **17**For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! **18**So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, NLT)

**What do I learn from this*?***I see that if we take the attitude that we are all ministers of the gospel—that we are all called to shine the light of God into our part of this dark world—we can take Paul’s life-giving attitude toward troubles. We can remain encouraged, even in troubles, because we have the chance to work for God.

Paul’s attitude toward troubles was that as we shine in the darkness of our troubles with, by, and through the light and grace of God in us, then the light (the truth) of the Gospel will shine into the darkness.

As we let God shine through our life, we spread the gospel, we help others and we also store up treasures in heaven, which Jesus tells us to do in Matthew 6:19-24. Oh, that we would all press on until the impenetrable, Divinely-ordained armor of this attitude is fully formed within us, surrounding and guarding our hearts even as “the mountains surround Jerusalem” (Psalm 125:2, NIV)!

*“As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people both now and forevermore. “(Psalm 125:2, NIV)*



Blessings and grace to you!

Freda,

February 2022