

## Providential Healing

Many friends and family have observed the remarkable change in health that I have undergone over the past several months. And there are new friends who note that my eating protocol is rather different and strictly regulated. Though I seek to be polite and partake of whatever is served, I remain on a regimented eating protocol the rest of the time at home, so let me tell you about it.

Notice that I titled this summary “Providential Healing.” Many friends and family have observed nearly miraculous changes over five years of progressive systemic health issues that culminated in me almost dying to my restoration to functional living today, only eleven months into this healing process. It was not a miraculous healing in the biblical sense of the word, in that God did not lay aside the rules of nature that He put into place. Yet, He graciously and providentially put the right people into my life who lavishly invested in my health. They taught me how to look upon food as medicine rather than the entertainment value it has typically played in our lives. Our palates are incredibly tied to texture and taste, and we’ve often been held hostage to our desire to eat whatever we desire, with no repercussions. Instead of the way of cooking and eating that I’d been used to for over forty years, I was required to buffet my body and make it my slave (1 Cor 9:27) and overhaul my life radically in how we cook and eat. This has been no minor or easy fix. Furthermore, there have been natural therapies and massive tweakings of natural supplements to provide my body what it had lacked for so many years, due, in large part, to genetically modified food.

Allow me to rewind the story just a bit. For those of you who are unaware of my history, I have been reasonably healthy all of my life but with typical setbacks that are common to our frail bodies as we live in a fallen world. However, that greatly changed in the winter and spring of 2012. During our Valentine’s dinner at Newtown Bible Church, my wife and a nurse got concerned over my weird behavior and bodily responses, so I went to the hospital for what they thought might have been a stroke. This episode was eventually “diagnosed” as a complicated migraine. Then, later in the spring, while continuing my remodeling business that helped compensate what the church was paying me as a co-pastor, my customer got so concerned over my heavy breathing all day that she took me to the ER where I was admitted for limb weakness and tachycardia that took several rounds of drugs to manage. This hospital stay of nearly a week began the medical search for the many progressing bodily issues.

Not to sound like a hypochondriac, but so that you can appreciate how difficult life had become, humor me as I recount just some of the issues that were going on then and progressed into a host of systemic issues for the next few years. My acid reflux that had been “cured” with my Nissen-fundoplication stomach surgery ten years earlier while I was in seminary had come back with a vengeance. Along with this gastro issue, I had esophagus dysmotility (such that I relied on gravity for my food to eventually slide down to my stomach), gastro-paresis (paralysis of the stomach), colon and other issues. I finally gave up the remodeling because I was unstable on ladders and the muscle weakness progressed to the point of me redoing my walkway at home, taking out the steps and readying it for the possible

wheelchair that I was rapidly headed toward. The muscle weakness began to include my neck and back. Some mornings it would be a chore just to hold my head up, so I'd recline most of the time in my chair. Some days I didn't even have back strength, so I'd lie on the floor of my study to get my work done. Each day became such drudgery and seemed endless, as I awaited the nighttime so I could just lie in my bed on my heating pad. The pain was daily, relentless, and increasing in intensity and variety. I was experiencing regular eye, ear, neck, back, and joint pain that was unremitting. Add to these issues the shortness of breath, palpitations, dry eyes, dizziness, interrupted sleep, bloating, brain fog (such that many times it was not safe for me to drive, nor could I think clearly for studying, writing, or counseling), overwhelming daytime sleepiness, etc. Do you get the picture of how difficult daily life had gotten?

So that you will not get the wrong impression, I will *not* speak disparagingly of medical professionals. I greatly appreciate the advances that God has allowed modern medicine to make, all as part of His common grace to mankind. Even still, there is much mystery and complexity that man has not unearthed, nor are many men willing to give Him praise and glory for us being "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14). I'm grateful to have those, such as orthopedic surgeons, who can piece us back together and any number of other medical benefits. Yet, all medical doctors can do is drug you or cut you. They are in the practice of medicine. Many times there is not the consideration of the great dangers of the drugs that are administered to help the body. For instance, for eight to ten years, doctors had me on inflammatory pain meds that my body became addicted to. Why was there no thinking outside the box? Why was there no consulting with other doctors of the natural medicine persuasion? Why wasn't there a greater attempt to get to the bottom of the pain, rather than cover it up with the bandages of pharmaceuticals?

While mainstream medical doctors might be quick to state that natural doctors are "witchdoctors," I'd say, based on my experience, such witchdoctors are on both sides of the fence.☺ After having surgery on both shoulders, major stomach surgery, where they sliced me from sternum to belly button, and muscle biopsies, I doubt that any of it would have been needed if I had been on my present health protocol. Yet it is not without a divine purpose. For a lifetime I will have the scars to remind me how far the Lord has graciously brought me by His kind and generous grace. I'm back from the brink of death, enjoying life and ministry, though I have more progress to make physically. Death will eventually come, but eternity in God's blessed presence awaits because of the shed blood of His perfect Son who ransomed me from sin.

I saw a host of specialists, from pulmonology, to nephrology, urology, cardiology, endocrinology, and many others, even escalating into genetic testing and various doctor requests for Mayo Clinic or other interventions. Cardiology, pulmonology, gastroenterology and other tests showed something was wrong, but doctors didn't know what was causing it all. Audiologists are glad, but amazed, that the tinnitus (ringing in ears) is gone. With all the advances in modern medicine, the host of specialists could not piece together why my body was falling apart, nor help improve the quality of life, or even get me to a functional capacity in life.

I do not agree with the Eastern religion that is incorporated into many of the natural doctors' repertoires. Yet, I have benefited greatly over the years. Over twenty-five years ago when I was a teenager, having exhausted the medical treatments for severe acne through dermatologist-recommended lotions and pills, a chiropractor solved my problem. He simply put me on a strict diet, along with a few natural supplements, and I went away to college. Low and behold, it worked. Now why didn't I pursue a natural course such as this sooner? One current doctor that I see traces my issue way back to those years when my gut was messed up through the medications given. Is she correct? Well, maybe that was the reason for the severe mono I got right after getting married, followed in a couple of years by massive gut issues that hospitalized me. A bad gut could be what contributed to a lifetime of fifteen to eighteen headaches per month, many of which were debilitating migraines. But all these symptoms and experiences seem disconnected, don't they? Unless the headaches were screaming at me right along that all was *not* okay.

I realize this sounds foreign to the ears of many of you. How could it be that there are less expensive and natural ways that can be used for health care and that can cause such dramatic restoration to health of the body? Yes, the food is more expensive, but all the junk we used to buy cost a lot as well! Plus, some of the natural remedies that we have been using had been in the Merck's Manual (the doctors desk reference) up until the early 1970s (I suppose maybe when pharmaceutical companies figured they could bottle the remedy and make a lot of money on it).

After all this rehearsal of the physical changes (I didn't even get into the spiritual battles of depression and anxiety of soul through the torture of daily living) and benefits that have taken place from natural therapies, regime of eating, and supplementation, you still might respond, "You can't prove that!" I would agree. We cannot use my life as a test case. All I have to go on is what I have experienced over the last eleven months of life that have been radically altered. I feel like the blind man that the Apostle John introduces us to. When the Pharisees and other religious hypocrites confronted his testimony, as they merely wanted to discredit Jesus's healing, the man's passionate reply was, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (Jn 9:25). Though I was deathly ill, I now feel so much better and can lead a functional life.

You have not been the one whose gut movements started up again after years of not working. You weren't the one sitting in my recliner in pain and weakness, just asking Jesus to take you home. You are not the one who can now walk up the hill out back; nor are you the one who has recently had calcium deposits pushing through the skin and falling off your body. *Seriously*. This is just crazy good how much God has graciously changed my corroding body. Furthermore, I won't belabor the point of other friends' experiences to validate how a similar natural protocol has helped them overcome cancer, Parkinsonism, early onset dementia, inflammatory colitis, etc. I just wish other people would consider the options. Like the one gentleman I'm aware of whose next visit to the hospital with another bowel obstruction will mean a re-sectioning of his colon. That is not necessarily his only option.☺

For me, I have gone off all twelve medications that the mainstream medical doctors had me on, and there are barely any physical complaints currently. They were unable to accomplish in over five years what has occurred over the past

several months. I do not question their motives or knowledge. I would simply plead with those of you who have life-besetting physical issues to recognize that many seemingly unrelated body issues could very well be related. The human body is complicated, as God intricately designed it, and it houses the soul of man that will live on eternally, either in heaven or in hell. There is such a need to deal with the body holistically, as a unit that gives many different signs and symptoms as a reaction to what it is being fed. That maybe...just maybe through a willingness to radically alter your lifestyle through disciplined eating and natural therapies you might see some similar benefits in your own health and quality of living.

I know how crazy it sounds when you hear, "It's all about the gut." After all, when I read that statement on one of my homeopathic doctor's website I said she's nuts and quite narrow minded and oblivious to other systemic issues that I experienced and that didn't seem connected. But the gut is the first line of defense. It is the biggest key to the immune system. Restoring health to the gut won't take care of some things, but it does mend seemingly unrelated parts of our body, as our body parts contribute to the whole. It is doubtful that this natural regime I'm on will cure the muscular dystrophy that a couple of doctors believe I have. Yet it can only help and strengthen the weakened muscles that had been so severely damaged and exposed, causing the substantial daily pain.

Probably most of you are still able to function and carry on in life with the food you eat, as your body didn't shut down like mine did, nor are you plagued with cancer or other horrible diseases. But could it be that your eczema, headaches, arthritis, or acid reflux are all ways that your body is trying to get your attention and tell you there is a problem?

Before signing off, let me warn you. My doctorate is *not* in medicine. Nor am I opposed to all medication. Yet, we cannot blindly follow someone just because they have some letters after their names. I'm simply pleading for balance and research and a willingness to work hard with discipline to change your lifestyle for the improvement of your health, rather than the easier way out.

God is *not* obligated to heal! Does He graciously do so? Many times, yes. And He doesn't necessarily do so miraculously, but instead, by giving the body what it needs. Furthermore, I am not tying this protocol to Scripture, like many misguided people have done with the Hallelujah Diet or other practices. But when we consider some biblical principles like stewardship and self-control, wouldn't it be worth your best try? As a matter of fact, shortly after some of the worst of my health battles, including when I literally lost my mind for two days (some of you wonder if I ever got it back), I used eating right to illustrate a lesson I did on "Self-control: A Forgotten Christian Virtue." You can find it in the audio/handout section of [biblicalexpositor.org](http://www.biblicalexpositor.org) under the "Biblical Counseling" category or you can access it here:

[http://www.biblicalexpositor.org/site/audidownloads.asp?sec\\_id=180007636&dl\\_year=0&dlcat=Biblical+Counseling](http://www.biblicalexpositor.org/site/audidownloads.asp?sec_id=180007636&dl_year=0&dlcat=Biblical+Counseling) .

As painful and difficult as the past few years were, I would not trade them at all. Though there is much mystery surrounding why God takes some of us through dark valleys like this, while preserving others from such issues (Deut 29:29), there is also much that we can know about it. We do *know* that God works all things

together for good—yes, even the bad things He works together—that He might produce Christlikeness in His followers (Rom 8:28-29). Though I don't know all that He was performing, I do believe one thing He was developing in me was compassion. I think He worked at making me more of a compassionate biblical counselor so that as I was comforted by the Lord, I might comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-7). Thus, as I give biblical principles to fellow believers who are struggling with depressive times, I'm not simply doling out biblical prescriptions but timeless truths and promises that I held onto daily, even moment-by-moment in the struggles of life.

Like I said at the beginning, if you have me over for a meal, don't stress and fret about what to feed me. I'm easy and eat whatever is set before me, for the most part. Ask those who have seen me come with my backpack that has my digestive enzymes and my organic olive oil and vinegar for salad. When you come to my house, your beef is going to be grass fed, your chicken cage free, and the olive oil organic. That's why you see me eat three meals and two snacks a day even if the snack is only some whey protein and some nuts. It's amazing how eating the right stuff every 3-3 ½ hours took care of the diabetes. I personally think this Low FODMOP and Paleo eating protocol is something everyone should be on, even though it was developed in New Zealand for IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) patients. Look at the American diet and you can see why I think so. 😊

Anyway, I hope this helps fill in the gaps for all who know I eat kind of weird. I had no choice. Health demanded it. I'll try not to talk about it; because I'm convinced most people are not willing to do what it takes to get the results. And this is no credit to me, but all glory and boasting to my Lord, who sustained and changed me, and provided the right people—from the docs, to the cheerleaders helping me learn to cook, to those who so graciously helped. Thank you, and to God alone be all the glory!

Soli Deo Gloria,

**Parker Reardon, D.Min.**

***Applegate Community Church***

18960 N. Applegate Rd.

Grants Pass, OR 97527

[www.applegatechurch.org](http://www.applegatechurch.org)

[www.biblicalexpositor.org](http://www.biblicalexpositor.org)

Adjunct Faculty, Liberty University

11.16.16