

Answers For Chuck Smith: A Refutation of Chuck Smith's Teachings Against The Faith Movement Part Two: The Healing Doctrine

If you have already asked for healing from the Lord, or if others have asked for you, you must, before you are conscious of any change, be able to say with faith, "On the authority of God's Word, I have the assurance that He hears me and that I am healed." To have faith means to surrender your body absolutely into the Lord's hands, and to leave yourself entirely to Him. Faith receives healing as a spiritual grace which proceeds from the Lord, even while there is no conscious change in the body. Faith can glorify God and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul...who healeth all of my diseases (Psalm 103:1, 3). The Lord requires this faith that He may heal. (Andrew Murray)¹

There is a great difference between asking and claiming, between wanting and taking. You must take Christ as your Healer-not as an experiment, not as a future, perhaps, but as a present reality. You must believe that He does now, according to His promise, touch your life with His Almighty Hand, and quicken the fountains of your being with His strength. Do not merely believe that He will do so, but claim and believe that He does touch you now, and begin the work of healing in your body. And go forth counting it done and acknowledging and praising Him for it. (A. B. Simpson)²

1. Chuck and False Comparisons

In Chuck Smith's book, *Answers For Today*, he writes against what is obviously the Word-Faith understanding of divine healing. Chuck begins his dissertation by poisoning the well (see <http://www.fallacyfiles.org/poiswell.html>). Chuck making the false comparison of the WoF divine healing doctrine to that of Christian Science commits this:

Many evangelists and ministers have begun to proclaim a new doctrine that sounds more as though it came from the pen of Mary Baker Eddy than from the Bible. They're teaching that we must make only positive confessions of faith and should never confess to being sick or feeling ill, because our words are a powerful creative force and we become what we say. Thus, no matter what our sickness, if we make a confession of faith, we will become well.³

Some may claim that there are many similarities between WoF and Christian Science. However, I do not find any. Here is why:

Christian Science does not acknowledge a personal God as the Word-Faith Preachers do. The Word-Faith teachers promote the person of Jehovah Rophe as the healer of the body (Exodus 15:26).

¹ Murray, Andrew **Divine Healing** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 35

² Simpson, A. B. **The Gospel of Healing**, The above quote is from the online version of the book. It seems to differ slightly from the hard copy published by Christian Publications. See page 65 of their version. I will assume that the one online is true to the original as Simpson wrote it.

³ Smith, Chuck **Answers for Today, Volumes 1 & 2** (Costa Mesa, CA: TWFT Publishers, 1993), p. 27

Christian Science relies on DENIAL while the Faith Teachers rely on God's Word. Faith Teachers believe in the present tense reality of God's promises. For example, Matthew 8:17 tells us that Jesus took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Believing that 1 Peter 2:24 teaches physical healing we are taught to confess that "by His stripes we WERE healed." Once we have prayed and sought God for healing, we are told to believe this to be done and confess it (Mark 11:24). It is the Word of God verbalized that releases faith which taps into God's healing power (Prov. 4:20-22; Psalm 107:20; Matt. 8:5-13).

Christian Science has no Evangelical roots, while Word-Faith Teaching have a valid Christian historical precedence. Some critics of the Word-Faith Movement would certainly like to proclaim otherwise, but research goes against such false claims. If one will read the quotes by Andrew Murray and A. B. Simpson at the beginning of this dissertation, they will see that Word-Faith teaching is rooted in Evangelicalism. Both Murray and Simpson were and still are respected writers.

Christian Science denies the purpose of medicine and doctors while Faith Teachers believe that these things have their place. Charles Capps might seem to be the most extreme among Faith Teachers. Yet he says, "If I need a doctor, I'll go to a doctor. If I need medicine, I'll take it."⁴

Christian Science denies a personal devil, the Word-Faith Movement acknowledges him. The Faith Teachers contribute most sicknesses to the work of the devil (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38). They see divine healing as warfare against Satan and his works (1 John 3:8).

Knowing the above demonstrates how inaccurate it is to imply that these teachers are preaching Mary Baker Eddy's doctrine. Disagree with them if you must, but do not make such false comparisons. Now we must deal with another "mistruth" stated by Chuck:

All illness, they assert, is a result of our negative confessions or lack of faith.⁵

They really do not state this at all. They teach that all sickness is the result of the fall of Adam and Eve. They also teach that sickness can be the result of satan's attacks on one's body. As far as faith and confession goes, the Faith Teachers teach that if one expects to be healed by God, then they must believe His promises concerning healing. They must not speak contrary to what God's Word says, but confess God's Word. By this, one is demonstrating faith in God and His Word and God will honor this faith by healing the person.

2. Chuck Believes it is cruel to tell people that sickness is not God's will.

Chuck acknowledges that some of the "positive confession" teaching has helped people, but goes on to bring harsh criticism:

As with all false teachings, much of what this healing doctrine says is true. Many Christians today are guilty of harboring negative attitudes and

⁴ Capps, Charles **Dynamics of Faith and Confession** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1987), p. 202

⁵ Smith, *Answers*, p. 27

defeatist complexes. I cannot deny that many people have been helped and healed by making a positive confession of faith. Yet, to say that it is God's will that none of His children be sick is wrong. And to say that they're sick because of a lack of faith, sin in their lives, or something amiss in their relationship with God is also wrong. I've known too many carnal Christians with marvelous health and too many deeply spiritual Christians with poor health to ever subscribe to such a heresy.⁶

Brother Smith says that this "FALSE" teaching has actually helped some Christians. Not sure how any kind of false teaching can ever help anyone, even when it is mixed with a little truth. False teaching usually puts people in bondage. It is only the complete TRUTH that is able to bring freedom (John 8:32).

I believe that Chuck is being very inconsistent at this point. He actually realizes after all of his railing against positive confession that there is really truth to the teaching - that one cannot have faith in God while speaking negatively. Yet, he spends more time on his perceived negatives.

Chuck's whole chapter is a faith destroyer for the reader who has no true knowledge of God's word, especially when we come to these words: "Yet, to say that it is God's will that none of His children be sick is wrong." I can agree with him when he writes against blaming all sickness for a lack of faith, sin, or a problem in one's relationship with God. This should not be done without a clear word from the Holy Spirit that such is the case. On the other hand, the other alternative that Chuck implies is disheartening. Chuck's alternative is to blame God by saying that sickness and disease is the will of God.

Faith teachers are often accused of "blaming the victim" by their critics. Yet, many of these same critics constantly put the blame on God, though they do so with such reverential and spiritual undertones. Phrases like "Let thy will be done" and "not my will but thine be done" in relation to sickness are a misuse of Scripture and a slap in God's face. Nowhere in the Bible has God ever willed sickness on an obedient child of His. Never does God take pleasure in any one's affliction.

The Bible describes sickness as an "oppression" (Acts 10:38), as a "bondage" (Luke 13:16), as "evil" (Deut. 7:15; 28; 30:15), as death (Deut. 28; 30:15, 19), as a curse (Deut. 28; 30:19), as "captivity" (Job 42:10), and it has its primary source in the fall of man and Satan's attacks on the body (Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; Heb. 2:14). How could a God who is as Good as "The Lord our Healer" (Exodus 15:26) ever "will" such a thing upon His own?

In my understanding of life and Scripture, it is not only unbiblical to teach that sickness is God's will; it is also a very cruel thing. To tell a person whose child has leukemia that such is the will of God is very cruel. To tell someone whose child has died some horrible death that such is the will of God is horrible, especially when it was Satan who wielded the power of death (Heb. 2:14) and that God declares death as an ENEMY (1 Cor. 15:26).

This is the type of theology that makes people ATHEISTS or REBELS against God. There are some Christians who will submit to God's so called purposes in their sickness and disease, or that which they see on a loved one, but no doubt that the struggle

⁶ Ibid, p. 28

with such because they do not understand how the creator of the universe could will such a thing and say that it is for their good. Pious ministers tell them that these things are "mysteries." Such ridiculous teaching is only consigned to a mystery because these men cannot find any valid Biblical justification for such a doctrine.

If one truly wants to know the will of God concerning sickness, look at the life of Jesus. Jesus came to earth demonstrating the will of God for all mankind. All that He ever said and did was from the Father (John 5:30; 12:49, 50; 14:9, 10, 24). He only did the Father's will. Yet, Jesus never put sickness on anyone nor did He ever deny a request for healing. On the contrary, the Bible teaches us that He healed ALL that came to Him (Matt. 8:16-17; Matt. 4:24; 12:15; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:40; 6:19; Acts 10:38).

Therefore, Scripturally speaking, it is NOT wrong to tell a person that sickness is not the will of God. Chuck is the one that is wrong for implying otherwise.

3. Chuck Smith appeals to the emotions of his readers

What better way to get your readers angry with those whom you are writing against than to appeal to their emotions? This is exactly what Chuck Smith does as he cites several cases of those who supposedly followed some Faith Teaching but remained sick, died, or lost a loved one. Yet, once again, Chuck is committing a logical fallacy.

Chuck says, "When I see the bad fruit from this doctrine, I can judge it to be false"⁷ and then cites several cases of people who supposedly suffered the consequences of following some faith teaching concerning divine healing. However, Chuck gives incomplete and inaccurate information. He then forms a conclusion from this information that is erroneous, but quite successful in getting a person angry with Faith Teachers - provided the person is unaware of what is actually taught by them.

First Chuck appeals to his readers' emotions by mentioning a couple who, "at the encouragement of a healing evangelist, took their diabetic child off insulin and by faith began claiming his healing." I do not doubt that such abuses happen in ministry, but is this a widespread teaching among healing and evangelists and faith teachers? Actually. Dr. Frederick K. C. Price actually speaks out against such foolishness:

"I am trying to help some of you husband's who put your wives and children into bondage, and make them suffer, just because you want to stand in faith. That is great for you to stand in faith, and I believe that you should do so, but I don't think that you should impose that on your wife and children."⁸

Dr. Price speaks against husbands denying their family members medical attention because they want them to do it by faith. Furthermore, Dr. Price, who himself does not take medicine, actually discourages others from going to extreme practices in the name of "faith:"

"Remember that you are receiving your healing by faith. It is a matter of what you believe in your heart, or your spirit. Your heart, by faith, knows

⁷ Ibid, p. 28

⁸ Price, Frederick K.C. **Faith, Foolishness, or Presumption** (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1979), p. 88

that you are healed, but your body doesn't know yet. Therefore, your body may still need the medication. So go ahead and take it if you need it. All glasses and medication are doing is allowing the body to function at a normal level, until the physical healing is manifested in your body."⁹

While I sympathize along with Chuck concerning the abuses that he cites, I am afraid that he paints too wide of a picture that seems to include all advocates of positive confession and divine healing when the evidence goes to the contrary.

He cites examples of people who thought that they were not saved because they were sick. Not one faith teacher that I am aware of would even come close to making such a statement. On the contrary, Faith Teachers make every effort to assure Christians of their salvation regardless of their physical condition. Even faith teachers such as Charles Capps would say, "We Build our faith and develop ourselves in God's Word. But if you get sick, don't feel condemned."¹⁰

Faith Teachers would like for sick Christians to aim for what they believe is God's highest will for them (which is to be healed) but they never deny that one goes to Heaven upon death regardless of faith or lack of faith in this area.

Chuck goes further to accuse Faith Teachers of being like Job's so-called friends who say that Job's condition is the result of some terrible thing in his life. Again, I do not deny that there may be some Faith Teachers who behave in this reprehensible manner, but Chuck's attempt to pigeonhole all Faith Teachers this way is equally erroneous and divisive. Especially when you have men like Oral Roberts who was known to cry over those who were sick and plead with God for their healing. Others try to meet people where they are.

One final example I will cite from Chuck's writings is the condemnation that came on a family by a faith advocate after their son died of leukemia. The family was told that it was their lack of faith and the way they prayed that made them responsible for the son's death.¹¹ While I would agree with the faith advocate that such is not the best way to pray for a sick child ("Thy will be done"), I would disagree with anyone bringing further hurt upon a family who has lost a child. The family needs comfort, not condemnation.

However, Chuck once again makes the insinuation that such condemnation is normal practice in Word-Faith circles. That is not the case at all. Faith Teachers certainly teach that it is God's highest will for our healing here on earth (Psalms 27:13), but they do not believe in condemning those that are sick nor do they want them to feel that they are less of Christians than anyone else. God loves us whether we are sick or healthy. We should aim for His best. His Word declares what His best is. Yet, if a Christian wants to go home to be with Jesus, they have that right as well.

While we should not play "blame the victim" we should also stay away from the equally erroneous idea of blaming God's sovereignty.

4. Chuck Smith conveniently limits the application of certain Scripture passages.

⁹ Price, Frederick K.C. **How Faith Works** (Los Angeles, CA: Ever Increasing Faith Ministries, 1976)

¹⁰ Capps, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 202

¹¹ Smith, *Answers*, p. 29

Chuck Smith will dismiss certain passages as being addressed to certain individuals and will affirm other passages as having wide applications to all Christians. For example, Brother Smith claims that 3 John 2 was only meant for Gaius:

When attempting to use the Scriptures to prove that God wants all of us to be healed, these false comforters point to 3 John 1:2; "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." In context this verse is not an expression of God's will for all His saints. Rather, it is John's personal wish for his friend, Gaius.¹²

First, what Chuck says here is not entirely true. 3 John 2 is far from the only verse that the faith teachers use to show that God wants all of us to be healed. Here are just TWO of the many other Scriptures used by Faith Teachers to build their case:

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

*Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the **prayer of faith shall save the sick**, and the **Lord shall raise him up**; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and **pray one for another, that ye may be healed**. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:14-16)*

The above passages are unambiguously clear that it is God's will to heal the sick. One must REINTERPRET the clear meaning of these passages in order to make them appear to say anything other than the fact that it is God's will to heal all that are prayed for in faith. As a matter of, we are commanded not to forget these benefits. If God did not want us to "forget them" then surely He wants us to have them.

Both the writer of Proverbs and James state the fact that God will forgive our sins. Most people are willing to believe that. Yet, they have so much difficulty accepting everything taught in these passages. Nevertheless, the language for the healing is just as strong as the language used for the forgiveness of sins. If one is guaranteed then so is the other. If one is not guaranteed then neither is the other. If we cannot take God at His Word concerning *forgiveness* part of those passages, then we cannot take Him at His word concerning the *healing* part as well.

So we can see that the Faith teachers can make their case without appealing to 3 John 2. Yet, is it unreasonable to appeal to this passage to make a case for God's will to heal? I have four thoughts in rebuttal to Chuck Smith's insinuation that Faith Teachers are in error for using 3 John 2:

a. If the greeting in 3 John 2 is meant only for Gaius then that means that this portion of the Bible cannot be considered Scripture because 2 Tim. 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

¹² Ibid, p. 30

instruction in righteousness." This means that there is a passage in the Bible that is not actually scripture, which means that the entire Bible could not be considered Scripture. If 3 John 2 is indeed considered Scripture then it is profitable to the believer.

b. If the greeting in 3 John 2 is meant only for Gaius then the whole epistle is meant only for Gaius. The whole epistle was written directly to him and him only. If we cannot apply verse 2 then we have no right to make application of any other verse in this epistle. That then means that the epistle cannot be considered Scripture since ALL SCRIPTURE is profitable to the believer (2 Tim. 3:16). This has even wider implications because then the books of Luke and Acts were only meant for Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1) and Philemon, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus was written only for the individuals being addressed. We would have no right to make any application of any passage from them. That would mean that all Scripture is not really Scripture.

c. If we must apply the greeting in 3 John 2 to Gaius only then in order to be consistent, we must apply the greetings in all the epistles in this manner. That means that only the Romans, Corinthian and Ephesian Christians were called to be saints (Rom. 1:7). Only the Corinthians were called to be sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2). We could go on. The fact is that the greetings were meant for the church universal as well as for them. For example, Paul writes to the Corinthians,

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (1 Cor. 1:2)

This proves that the greetings in these epistles have universal church application, because they are inspired Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

d. You will find later in this same chapter that Chuck Smith makes reference to Paul's thorn in the flesh. He seems to believe that Paul's thorn has an application that reaches further than Paul as an individual. Chuck believes that others may suffer from thorns as well. If Chuck wanted to be consistent with his theology then he would teach that the "thorn theology" is only applicable to Paul. After all, Paul himself said, "there was given to me {Paul} a thorn in the flesh". Paul never once said that others would suffer his thorn or any other thorn. Therefore, for Chuck to dismiss 3 John 2 as a greeting to only one individual but make such a wide application of 2 Cor. 12:7 is hypocritical and inconsistent.

5. Chuck Smith and The Mark 11:23 debacle

Chuck seems to really have a problem with the Faith Teachers and their understanding of Mark 11:23. Chuck says, "This {Mark 11:23} is the basis for teaching the importance of someone making the right confession, with the emphasis on having whatever 'he saith.'"

Chuck does not attempt to offer an alternative exposition of the passage that would refute the understanding supposedly given by the Faith Teachers. He simply just continue writing thoughts could insinuate that the Faith Teachers are misunderstanding the text, but he offers no real sound exposition of the text that would prove the Faith Teachers are wrong.

I would agree with Chuck to a certain extent that Mark 11:23 is not a blanket statement that we could have any ungodly lust and selfish desire just by "saying it." I can assure the reader that the majority of faith teachers would also agree on this.

I would also assert here that Mark 11:23 is primarily in reference to "commanding prayer" or "authoritative prayer." However, can this passage be used in reference to "positive confession"? If used in conjunction with verse 24, I believe so. I personally believe that a Positive (Faith) Confession is the connection to Answered Prayer. I believe it is one of the "faith actions" that we do between the prayer and the answer. Let's look at the passages together:

*"In solemn truth I tell you that if any one shall say to this mountain, 'Up and hurl yourself into the sea!' and shall not doubt in his heart, but on the contrary shall believe that what he says will happen, it will be granted him. That is why I am telling you that whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe that you have received it, and it shall be yours.**" (Mark 11:23, 24; Montgomery New Testament)*

The Lord tells us that Mark 11:23 is the very reason for the statement that He is about to make in verse 24. If faith can move a mountain then we can have the confidence that we will - no - that we HAVE - that we have RECEIVED - the very things we ask for in prayer the moment that we ask them.

These things may not appear to us in visible form but they are so guaranteed that faith acts as if it already has it in its possession. Hebrews 11:1 tells us, "*Now faith is the **title-deed of things hoped for; the putting to the proof of things not seen.**"* (Montgomery New Testament) Hope, which is a future expectation, becomes a guaranteed and a possession when it turns into faith.

Therefore, if I believe that I am in possession of the very thing that I have asked God for, I will TALK and ACT as if I have it, even when I do not see it physically. It is only by my taking possession of it by faith that I receive it in actual possession later. That means that my SPEECH must line up with my beliefs. I must SAY IT (in faith) in order to HAVE IT. If I speak contrary to what Scripture says, I cannot expect to possess it.

Nevertheless, does this mean that we can have whatsoever we say? If it is backed by God's promises, DEFINITELY!!! And the good news is, God has made an abundance of promises to heal our physical bodies (Ex. 15:26; 23:25, 26; Deut. 7:15; Prov. 4:20-22; Psalm 103:1-5; 107:20; Matt. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:24; James 5:14-16 and others). Since God has made these promises, He will give them to us when we ask Him for them in prayer (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14, 15). Since we are praying in accordance with God's revealed will, we can claim the answer immediately (Mark 11:24). We can declare that we believe that we have received. We will have the very thing that we say. One should not let otherwise good men like Chuck Smith discourage you from taking God at His Word.

6. Chuck Smith, Paul's Thorn, and Sickness

Chuck Smith now alludes to the common argument used by many opponents of the belief that healing is God's will for all who come to Him in faith (James 5:14-16). Chuck Smith refers to Paul's thorn in the flesh. Chuck insinuates that it may have been some type of eye disease:

Paul had an angel of Satan to buffet him. His thorn in the flesh may have been a very painful eye disease causing his eyes to run continually. There are several allusions to this in the Scriptures (Galatians 4:15; 6:11).¹³

Notice that Chuck says that there are "allusions" to this in Scripture. In other words there is supposed to be a "hint" or an "indirect mention" in Scripture of Paul having some eye disease. Based on a plain reading of both passages, I believe that Chuck's allusions are nothing more than illusions.

Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. (Gal. 4:15)

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. (Gal. 6:11)

Someone would actually have to read eye disease into those passages in order to make them say such a thing. Paul certainly did not say that he had an eye disease. If he had one he would not have spoken in such cryptic terms.

Yet, Chuck and many others attempt to use these passages (along with 2 Cor. 12:7) to dispute the belief that we can claim God's promises for healing. They like to teach that Paul was sick and so we must suffer sickness. After all, if Paul was not healed then why should we expect to be healed?

It is unfortunate that such an interpretation has a long standing in history, dating all the way back to the church fathers. However, the great reformer, Martin Luther disputes this interpretation. In his commentary on Galatians, Luther writes these comments on Galatians 4:14, 15:

St. Jerome and others of the ancient fathers allege this infirmity of Paul's to have been some physical defect, or concupiscence. Jerome and the other diagnosticians lived at a time when the Church enjoyed peace and prosperity, when the bishops increased in wealth and standing, when pastors and bishops no longer sat over the Word of God. No wonder they failed to understand Paul.

When Paul speaks of the infirmity of his flesh he does not mean some physical defect or carnal lust, but the sufferings and afflictions which he endured in his body. What these infirmities were he himself explains in II

¹³ Ibid, pp. 32, 33

Corinthians 12:9, 10: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." And in the eleventh chapter of the same Epistle the Apostle writes: "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck," etc. (II Cor. 11:23-25.) **By the infirmity of his flesh Paul meant these afflictions and not some chronic disease.** He reminds the Galatians how he was always in peril at the hands of the Jews, Gentiles, and false brethren, how he suffered hunger and want.¹⁴ (Emphasis are mine)

As we can see, Luther would dispute with many critics of the Faith Movement such as Chuck Smith. Even the "allusion" to Galatians 6:11 would not fit well in Luther's theology. The claim is that the so-called "large" alphabetical letters in this epistle was due to the fact that Paul had difficulty seeing. However, Luther certainly did not see this as a valid interpretation. Luther writes:

With these words the Apostle intends to draw the Galatians on. "I never," he says, "wrote such a long letter with my own hand to any of the other churches." His other epistles he dictated, and only subscribed his greetings and his signature with his own hand.¹⁵

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the reformer is unimportant, though he does offer another perspective from a historical aspect. The fact is that if one does not have any clear passage of Scripture stating that Paul had an "eye disease" then the only recourse left is to take a couple of Scriptures, put them together, and invent this malady for Paul. What an excellent way to DESTROY FAITH.

While I understand that some proponents of the message of faith and healing are guilty of abuse, we should be very careful about reading a contrary theology in the Bible just to oppose this abuse. Abuse cannot be dealt with by teaching an unbiblical untruth.

Thankfully, there are noncharismatic cessationists in our day like Tony Warren who actually dispute this claim that Paul's thorn in the flesh is some kind of sickness:

Many Theologians of our day have made the assumption that the thorn in the flesh which Paul testified of in 2nd Corinthians, was likely some physical ailment. The theories are that it was probably stammering speech, or bad eye sight. Many others make the supposition that we can't really know from the scriptures what the thorn in the flesh was. Has biblical hermeneutics digressed so far that comparing scripture with scripture is

¹⁴ Luther, Martin **Commentary on Galatians** (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications), edited by John Price Fallowes, M.A.

¹⁵ Ibid.

considered an option? Even the use of the common concordance would reveal the truth here.¹⁶

While I am far from agreeing with much of what is written in Warren's article, he is absolutely correct on the above. The Bible uses the analogy of a thorn many times in Scripture (Joshua 23:13; Numbers 33:55; Judges 2:3; Ezekiel 2:6; Luke 6:44; Hebrews 6:8-9) and none of those times do we even have the allusion that it is some type of sickness. Warren goes on to write:

God's scriptural symbolism of thorns is totally consistent with messengers of satan, and totally contradictory to it being understood as an illness. For literal diseases and sicknesses are "not" messengers of Satan come to buffet us. Nowhere in scripture is the term Messenger of Satan ever used to describe an illness. That is also not an insignificant fact! But we all know that evil men (and particularly false teachers), are indeed messengers of Satan. The fact that we have no Biblical warrant or justification for calling this Messenger of Satan, a disease, or illness, should rule out any legitimate basis for calling Paul's thorn a sickness or illness. Unless for some extraneous reason we are simply predisposed to believe that. Thorns in the bible never signifies sickness.¹⁷

I intentionally reference Warren's article because warren is not a Charismatic and he is not a Word-Faith believer. Warren appears to be calvinistic in his doctrinal position. I would also guess that he is somewhat cessationist in his theology. Therefore, no one could accuse me of bias by citing this author.

Warren makes a good biblical case against the claim that Paul's thorn was some sickness or disease. Chuck's allusion to this in order to dispute with those to who he disagrees with is a fallacious technique. The case cannot be made. yet, even if one could make a case for the thorn being a sickness and if one wants to claim their sickness to be a thorn sent from God, then pull up a chair and be ready to receive the abundance of revelation that God has given them. After all, if we are going to keep Scripture in context, this was the very reason for Paul's thorn.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by reassuring the reader that I hold no ill will towards Chuck Smith. I believe that he is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and has been used by God. However, Chuck has made some strong accusations towards people of faith that do not stand up against the evidence. Furthermore, his zeal to address abuses that he has seen has led him to promote ideas that are inconsistent with Scripture. These two papers address and refute the false accusations and unscriptural ideas presented by him. Yet, neither is meant to be attacks on Smith or his character.

¹⁶ Warren, Tony **The Thorn In The Flesh**, <http://members.aol.com/twarren20/thorn.html> (Last accessed: 13 December, 2004)

¹⁷ Ibid.

The task was never to discredit the ministry of Chuck Smith, even though, in my assessment, he attempted to do just that to others that he disagreed with. Notice his references to those he disagrees with as being “false teachings, false prophets, false comforters, etc.” Therefore the intention was to prove these particular accusations as being false. If these papers serve to strengthen the faith of the reader concerning God’s provision and desire for their healing, then the main purpose of the papers has been accomplished.