

## HEALING

I was recently listening to the story of someone's relative who is suffering from a severe health problem, one that had been ongoing for a number of years. The family had enlisted the best medical help. With feelings of frustration and maybe even a little anger, they talked about the many prayers to God for healing but there was no improvement. WHY didn't God heal someone who is a long-time, faithful member? Many of us remember hearing or even experiencing miraculous healings years ago but where is God's healing today?

That question can lead to many others. What are the conditions for healing? Doesn't God promise to heal us? If we aren't healed, what are we doing wrong? We can be overwhelmed with all the questions and thoughts that come upon us, not only when we see others who are sick but especially when we ourselves are afflicted. So, let's take a fresh look at Scripture and understand healing from God's perspective.

[FV] PSALMS 30:2-3 O LORD my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me.  
3 O LORD, You have brought up my soul from the grave; You have kept me alive, so that I should not go down to the pit.

There is little doubt about the meaning here. The word *cried* literally means to “cry for freedom from trouble” and the word *healed* means to *mend* or *cure*. Here, David was on the verge of death and gives credit to God for preserving his life.

David was a man who was well acquainted with hardship. He endured years of attempts on his life by King Saul. Absalom, his son, murdered another of David's sons, Amnon, and later tried to usurp his throne which forced David to flee Jerusalem for a time. There were many such situations that David endured; some he brought upon himself while others seemed to be without cause. Even so, God delivered him at APPROPRIATE times even though David endured some for years. One important lesson is that David always ACTED as he was able, rather than doing nothing, while patiently expecting God's will, intervention, and deliverance. Remember Goliath. David WENT OUT to fight him instead of expecting God to destroy him. David knew that God would work THROUGH him and not FOR him.

[FV] MALACHI 4:2 But unto you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, and healing will be in His wings. And you shall go out and grow up like calves of the stall.

This is another scripture that we often read; however, in the context is the return of Jesus Christ. Not only is it future tense but it the word for *healing* is different from that of Psalms 30:2. Its meaning is CURATIVE but also, especially in this context, refers to DELIVERANCE. In fact, the whole chapter is focusing upon the Day of the Lord. Verses one and three tell us the Lord will destroy the wicked and DELIVER His people.

One scripture we really need to understand is Isaiah 53:5. We know that Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins and it is through His suffering that we are healed:

[FV] ISAIAH 53:5 But He [was] wounded for our transgressions; [He was] crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace [was] upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed.

The word *healed* is same word used in Psalms 30:2. However, the primary purpose for the suffering and death of Jesus Christ was to “pass over” our own death and so become the Intercessor for our transgressions (verse 12). This is picked up in chapter 54 which is obviously millennial. Notice Isaiah 54:5 which says, “your Maker [is] your husband”. When will that occur? When we become the bride of Jesus Christ at His return!

But what about the blessings mentioned in Deuteronomy? God most definitely makes a promise to His people! Let's read it:

[FV] DEUTERONOMY 7:12,15 And it shall come to pass, if you hearken to these judgments to keep and practice them, [then] the LORD your God shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. ...15 And the LORD will take away from you all sickness and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you. But He will lay them upon all who hate you.

There are two things we must understand as we read this. First, God is promising that He will remove the sickness (malady, anxiety, calamity) from the land that HE BROUGHT upon the Egyptians. Read of the blessings and cursings in chapter 28 and notice especially verse 60:

[FV] DEUTERONOMY 28:60 Also, He (God) will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid. And they shall cling to you.

We live in a land that has forsaken God and, just as He told the ancient Israelites, this country now has diseases that were never heard of just a generation ago. These are brought about by God and will only get worse. What did Jesus Christ pray of the Father? “I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one.” - John 17:15. Sadly, this leaves us vulnerable to the same diseases.

[FV] JOHN 17:14-15 I have given them Your words, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one.

Many also turn to this scripture when the topic of healing arises. So what does it say? The prayer of faith shall SAVE the sick. Although it is in the Greek, the word *save* has basically the same meaning as *heal* in Malachi 4:2; that is, it means *cure* but refers more to SALVATION. Perhaps when he wrote this, James was thinking of what Jesus said about Lazarus in John 11:4:

[FV] JOHN 11:4 4 But after hearing [this], Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

God and Jesus see things from an eternal perspective. Although Jesus knew that Lazarus was physically dead, He also knew God could easily raise him again. That is why He said his sickness was NOT unto death. Death, from Jesus' perspective, is eternal so Lazarus was really just sleeping and He was there to awaken him.

This brings us to the second thing we must understand about healing. God's covenant with ancient Israel was a promise of physical blessings - land, children, and good health. Healing for them was PHYSICAL so they might have long, prosperous lives. Still, physical death was their end. The new covenant is spiritual, so the promise is eternal life; the end of death! Those under the old covenant sought physical healing but those under the new covenant seek spiritual, eternal healing. We know that physical death is like sleep from which God can easily awaken us.

Does this mean God no longer heals those that are physically sick? No; however, miraculous healings have always been and still are on a case-by-case basis. David and Hezekiah were healed because God chose to do so because He still had work for them to accomplish. Even so, there were many evil Kings of ancient Israel that lived and reigned much longer than the few righteous ones. God isn't focused on our number of years upon this earth. Jesus Christ overcame death for us so God's promise to us now about healing spiritual death. Our infirmities and death in this physical life are not God's greatest concern. Our personal, eternal salvation is foremost in His mind.

Experience tells us that God doesn't heal every one of His children, and this is true even among the great apostles. Three times Paul beseeched God and three times God refused to heal him of a painful affliction (2 Corinthians 12:7-8) that was likely a disease of his eyes (Galatians 4:14-15). Did God refuse because Paul lacked faith? No, but God had a greater purpose:

[FV] 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Even though God had healed people through Paul, including a young man who died, Paul did not receive such for himself from God. It wasn't God's will. Paul understood that God knew more about how to bring him to perfection and rejoiced in his own suffering because of the eternity to come:

[FV] PHILIPPIANS 4:12 For **I have experienced being brought low**, and I have experienced abounding. In everything and in all things I have **been taught** both to be full and to hunger, both to abound and to be without.

His affliction was probably a major turning point in Paul's life. There can be no doubt that Paul was very zealous for God and his direct approach easily offended others. He was merciless with Peter in rebuking his dealings with the Gentiles. Barnabas and Mark also felt Paul's sting (Acts 15:36-39), and it wouldn't be surprising if it happened more than once.

But notice something about the books Romans and 1 Corinthians. Paul wrote both of

them and whenever he mentions mercy it is always in the context of GOD showing mercy toward HIS people. However, starting with his second letter to the Corinthians, the same book in which he described the thorn in his flesh that God refused to heal, Paul begins to talk about God's mercy toward himself and about his own feelings of mercy toward others. Through his suffering he was perfected in mercy. ALL his later writings reflect a different kind of Paul. In them, he writes with much more empathy and DESIRES God's mercy for himself and others. It is a dramatic change from the Saul who once went around arresting and murdering people in the name of God. The new Paul showed great mercy toward others because he understood their pain through his own sufferings. What kind of man would Paul have been without suffering in the name of Jesus Christ? It warrants some thought because God is more interested in our hearts than our well-being in this physical life.

We cannot comprehend WHY God does or doesn't heal unless we understand that people only rise to their full potential only through adversity. Just as Jesus Christ was perfected by his sufferings (Hebrews 5:8-9), God allows us to suffer to bring us to perfection:

[FV] ROMANS 8:17-18 Now if [we are] children, [we are] also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

For this reason, God and Jesus Christ have PROMISED that trials will come upon us. Read each of the following verses carefully because suffering is something that is the cost of eternal life.

[FV] JOHN 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world.

[FV] ACTS 14:22 [Where] they established the souls of the disciples, exhorting [them] to continue in the faith, and [declaring] that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

[FV] 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 4 So that we ourselves are boasting about you in the churches of God because of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions, and in the tribulations that you are bearing. 5 [Your faith and endurance are] a visible testimony of the righteous judgment of God, so that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

[FV] 2 TIMOTHY 2:12 If we endure (suffering), we shall also reign together with [Him]; if we deny [Him], He will also deny us;

[FV] 2 TIMOTHY 3:12 And indeed, everyone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.

[FV] 1 PETER 4:12 Beloved, **do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you [which is] taking place to test you,** as if some strange thing [were] happening to you.

Trials, suffering, and persecution come in many forms. Some are about jobs and money, some are about a spouse or children, some involve the Church, some are in the form of illness or injury. God will use whatever He deems necessary to help us overcome so that He can impute His righteousness to us.

Now it is certain that God has healed in the past and probably will continue to do so, but it is all according to His will for our eternal salvation. Still, healing from God requires something from us as well.

[FV] ACTS 14:9 This [man] heard Paul speaking; who, after looking intently at him, and seeing **that he had faith to be healed,**

Without faith, even Jesus Christ couldn't help others:

[FV] MATTHEW 13:58 And He did not do many works of power there **because of their unbelief.**

But more than faith is required:

[FV] JAMES 5:16 Confess [your] faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. [The] **supplication of a righteous man prevails much, being effective.**

We know that Jesus Christ's suffering and death placed Him in the position of our intercessor with God, for our forgiveness and our healing. Beyond faith, we must pray with fervency.

[FV] 1 CORINTHIANS 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with [him]; [and] if one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with [him].

How can someone suffer when someone else suffers? Agape. Godly love. If we truly have the love of God IN us, we cannot be cold witnesses to the suffering of others. Any member of a family that is sick will get the full support and help of the rest of the family if there is agape. God seeks out those that sigh and cry over the abominations of the world and even the sufferings of others and even the whole world.

[FV] HEBREWS 13:3 **Be mindful of prisoners, as if you were imprisoned with [them]; [and think] of those who are suffering afflictions, as if you yourselves were in [their] body.**

However, all this will not GUARANTEE that God will miraculously heal any one of us. Why? Besides the fact that God promises to try us so we are perfected, there's another more subtle reason.

All the suffering and disease that comes upon our brethren has a dual purpose. Those

that suffer are also a TEST for others. In talking about the works of faith, James tells us that it not enough to DO NOTHING. He says,

[FV] JAMES 2:14-18 My brethren, what good [does] it do, if anyone says [that] [he] has faith, and does not have works? Is faith able to save him? 15 Now then, if there be a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you says to them, "Go in peace; be warmed and be filled," and does not give to them the things necessary for the body, what good is it? 17 In the same way also, **faith, if it does not have works, is dead, by itself.** 18 But someone is going to say, "You have faith, and I have works." [My answer is:] You prove your faith to me through your works, and I will prove my faith to you through my works.

Clearly, if we know a brother or sister in need, whether it is due to sickness or disease or some other condition, our faith is proven through our works. The closer we are to someone, THE MORE GOD EXPECTS FROM US because we are familiar with their needs more than others. Knowing of someone's needs is where we find opportunity to serve.

This is even more poignant for those who have experienced similar trials as others. Those who have endured similar trials have learned strength and faith that they can share with others so that they might be encouraged by the example of someone who fully understands. This is why support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous came about.

[FV] 2 CORINTHIANS 1:4-7 **(God) Who comforts us in all our tribulation, in order that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trial, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For to the degree [that] the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6** And if we are in distress, [it is] for your comfort and salvation, which is being worked out by [your] enduring the same sufferings that we also suffer; [and] if we are comforted, [it is] for your comfort and salvation (and our hope [is] steadfast for you); 7 Knowing that as you are partners in the sufferings, [you are] also [partners] in the comfort.

So, have we answered the question about the apparent lack of healings in the Church? No. Maybe this generation has more to learn with the approaching tribulation. Perhaps, living in this age of godless and loveless people, we need to grow more in agape love through the suffering of others. Maybe people needed more encouragement in times past to endure the divisions and strife in the Church that occurred on a global scale.

Healings seem to occur mostly for three reasons: to encourage our faith (especially those that are new), to cut short a trial before it becomes unbearable, and to allow a particular work to continue. Regardless of the reasons, be absolutely confident in one thing - God is preparing us individually and collectively to become children in His eternal Kingdom. Therefore, He is most concerned with our final, spiritual healing.

[FV] REVELATION 7:14 ... "They are the ones who have come out of the **great tribulation**; and they have washed their robes, and have made their robes white in

the blood of the Lamb.

Through trials of disease, sickness, injury, loss, hunger, thirst, cold, and many other sufferings, look to God and Jesus Christ while not forgetting your brethren. For when these things come upon us, our hope lies above us and yet, through God, many times our help comes from among us.

[FV] 1 PETER 5:10 Now may the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after [you] have suffered a little while, Himself perfect you, establish, strengthen, [and] settle [you].