

A Look at Healing (Part 2)

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John 4.46-54; 5.1-17; 9.1-41

Last Sunday I spoke on the topic of healing; a topic prompted by the three examples of healing found in John's Gospel, namely the healing of an official's son (John 4.46-54), the invalid at the *Pool of Bethesda* (John 5.1-17), and the man born blind (John 9.1-41). There are of course other accounts of healing elsewhere in Bible.

The following three sections is a summary of material from last week.

Causes of Illnesses and Diseases

1. In the final analysis, all illnesses, frailties, etc. are due to the Fall and satan is to blame.
2. As result of the Fall of Adam and Eve, when we grow older, our bodies deteriorate and eventually we will physically die.
3. However, while illnesses and diseases are common to all, some illnesses result from specific sin.
4. Illnesses and diseases are occasions for personal growth.
5. Coping victoriously with illnesses and diseases demonstrate our steadfastness in following the Lord.

Reasons for Divine Healing in the New Testament

1. The primary reason for divine healing by Jesus was to **authenticate** who He is.
2. Similarly, divine healing **displays God's glory**.
3. Miracles and signs also **validated and authenticated** Jesus' disciples and their message of salvation through Jesus Christ.
4. Healing people and other miracles were also instrumental in **fostering people's faith**.
5. People were often divinely healed because of **compassion and mercy**.

The Experience of Divine Healing Today

The question at the forefront of most people's minds is, "*What about divine healing today? Is divine healing a legitimate expectation?*" The answers range from an emphatic and unqualified "Yes" to an absolute, "No." At the one end of the spectrum people contend that God desires to heal all people now, while at the other end, people contend that divine healing no longer exists. They believe it ceased with the death of the first disciples. The past 2,000 years make it clear God does not divinely heal everyone, let alone all His children of illnesses and diseases. It is true sickness, disease, etc. are abnormal and God desires all His children to be cured; however, that will not be fully

realized until we receive resurrection bodies. At same time, most of us aren't ready to deny divine healing outright.

My first experience of divine healing occurred only a matter of days after the Lord saved Beverley and me. Our eldest son was only about 6 months old and had developed a blockage in one of his tear ducts. We had already met with our doctor who had scheduled a medical procedure to correct the persistent problem. In the meantime, we were saved and learned about praying for specific needs and met people in this new community who talked about God healing people. I don't recall whether we asked others to pray for our son; but we awkwardly did – not quite knowing the right way to ask and phrase our request. Our faith was fairly tentative and fragile; it certainly was not ready to move mountains. It was just enough to dare to ask God to heal our son. Well guess what? He did! Just before the scheduled procedure was to happen! Last week I dug out our old calendars and marked on October 5, 1975, was the scheduled appointment at the *Charles Camsell Hospital* in Edmonton. God healing our son certainly got our attention and served to shape and build our faith.

Faith and Divine Healing

Last week I mentioned those who claim God doesn't want any of His children to be sick and people just need to have enough faith and they will be healed. The inescapable corollary to that statement is, if a person isn't healed it is because they don't have enough faith. Hence, if people have any doubts about God healing them, they must somehow manufacture enough faith to really believe they will be healed. How does one do that when it isn't sufficiently clear in Scripture that God promises to heal everyone? Years ago, another pastor and I discussed the topic of divine healing. He was much more charismatic in his thinking than me. He passionately believed that if a person prayed for God to heal someone, believed very strongly God would heal them, and prayed with authority, God would heal that person. I responded with a more moderate approach which embraced dependence on God's will.

It was only a short time later Beverley and I attended our denomination's annual Workers Retreat and I began feeling very unwell. Before we left for the retreat our second son had had the flu and I concluded it was my turn. Sadly, I became far more familiar with the bathroom than the conference room. I was not well; it was the worst I had felt in a very long time. After a couple of days, I concluded it was something far more serious than the flu. I had intense abdominal pain; nothing stayed down. When we got home, before Beverley took me to emergency, I left my wallet at home; I knew I would be staying. The staff in emergency had a keen eye. They had me on a bed in a handful of minutes; their immediate attention only heightened my assessment that this was very serious. They probably gave me some pain medication and then everyone just left me alone to stare at the ceiling and contemplate my future.

By way of full disclosure, this was the first time I would stay overnight in a hospital since I was a little child and I still had memories about how terrorizing that had been. As a result of my role as a pastor I had become more comfortable with hospitals, but I had also acquired a lot of insight into what they do in hospitals and a lot of it wasn't very comforting as I waited.

Suddenly, as I lay on that bed in emergency, the conversation with my pastor friend on healing sprang into my mind. I realized I was no longer in the discussion phase about healing but was now in the application phase. This was where the rubber met the road. Did I want to be healed? Of course! There was no doubt about that! God knew I didn't want to be there! He knew how anxious I was! He knew about my concerns about what may lay ahead. At that point I didn't know if I had an inoperable tumor; perhaps cancer was making its way throughout my body. I didn't know whether the next conversation would be the, *get your things in order* speech.

As I waited, I remembered the innumerable times I had prayed for people in situations just like the one I was in and assured them God would care for them; that He would pour out His grace from His inexhaustible supply and it would be sufficient. I realized I was now in the place to discover for myself whether what I told them was true. In those moments **I discovered that every promise I had shared with others was true** as the peace of God enveloped me more and more and all I needed was just enough faith to trust Him and hold tightly onto His hand and experience the sufficiency of His grace to get me through.

And it was going to take a lot of grace as the *crew* returned and a nurse warned me, "*This is going to hurt,*" before she rammed a tube down my nose that felt more like a garden hose. She was right! It did hurt; a lot! And that was followed by X-rays and more X-rays which revealed the problem. A piece of my small intestine had become lodged in another piece, I think the medical term is *intussusception*. It created a complete stoppage which took five days to dislodge on its own – well, **actually God did it!** After five days of no food or fluids, *Jell-O* never tasted so good! I didn't need to come up with enough faith to heal me – I only needed enough faith to trust God and the sufficiency of His grace! That's what God asks us to do! To trust Him! To realize **we are always safe in His hands**. He isn't going to leave nor forsake His children, especially not in the midst of illness, disease, or physical crisis. It may not turn out the way we wished or hoped, but God will still care for us. Even if it should culminate in physical death and we should stand before Him to give an account of our life to Him, despite the pain our loved ones will experience, all pain, suffering, sickness, and disease will be no more for those whose faith and trust is in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Nor do we need to be afraid to pray, "*If it be Your will,*" as though if we don't say that, we might be able to slip something by the Lord that isn't His will. Those who claim that praying a prayer that is contingent on God's will, is faithless and will negate the answer

we wish, should reconsider their theology since that is how Jesus prayed. On the night He was betrayed, this is what He prayed:

Matthew 26:39 (ESV) ³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Matthew 26:42 (ESV) ⁴²Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”

Jesus was on the threshold of what He knew would be horrific. If there was any way to accomplish His Father’s mission by circumventing it, may that be so, but if not, He would trust His Father and His will as He had always done. That gives us insight into how we ought to pray, certainly for healing – trust God! Accept His will no matter how much it conflicts with our preference! That takes real faith! Resolving to walk with God and trust Him and the sufficiency of His grace no matter what.

What Should We Do When We Have a Health Need?

The following points all integrate together; let me begin with the critical importance of:

1. Prayer

Whether it be for us or someone else, we should pray for God’s healing, care, and provision. Pray God will grant His strength to persevere; to replace fear with peace; to envelope a person with His presence; to come alongside with reassurance to not leave nor forsake His child. Pray for wisdom and guidance for health care personnel as they assess and treat. Pray the person will grow throughout the journey; that their relationship with the Lord will deepen. Pray for steadfastness throughout, that the enemy won’t succeed with sowing seeds of doubt. That they will not be overcome with negative thinking and believe the endless supply of lies from the enemy. Pray for God to remind people of truths of Scripture that they have stored deeply in their hearts and minds and which confront any doubts they face.

I have encountered many people over the years who experienced disruptive thoughts and dreams. I don’t know the degree to which satan and his demonic realm can invade people’s thoughts and dreams while they sleep, but it appears they are involved. We live in a very sophisticated world and people tend to relegate demonic activity to pagan jungles, but the world of darkness is increasingly bold in raising its ugly face in North America. It hasn’t abandoned the goal of disrupting people’s lives. We must pray for God’s protection and take a stand against our enemy on the authority of God’s Word. Many times I have prayed the demonic realm would be prevented from disrupting children with frightening dreams and God has provided that protection.

Be faithful in praying for God’s healing and care of those with physical needs.

2. Seek Health Care

God has gifted people to learn about the human body, its complexities, and how it functions. He has enabled people to figure out why people get sick and how to address many illnesses and diseases. He has guided people in the development of remedies and medications. For example, if it were not for God's enabling, Alexander Fleming would never have come up with penicillin in 1928. God has given people minds to discover ways to intervene, repair, and replace. The advances of modern medicine are incredible. We should thank God for the men and women whom God has gifted and enabled to discover new treatments, procedures, medications and so on and for their unselfish effort in caring for others. Whether those involved in health care realize it or not, God often reaches down and guides them, prompts them as they make decisions; opens their eyes to see something they would otherwise miss. God is in every Emergency Ward, OR, ICU, Step-down Unit, etc. And God is particularly attentive to His children.

The medical community does its part and God does the healing as He knits broken bones back together, mends tissue, regenerates people's bodies, and so on. Doctors diagnose, prescribe, treat, perform surgery, but only God heals. All medical care that is not in conflict with the Scriptures is acceptable for God's children.

3. Foster a Teachable Spirit

Fostering a teachable spirit is something to seek and nurture from the moment a person is saved. We don't need to wait until we have a serious health need before pursuing it. It is a pattern to follow as a normal course of life. In all circumstances be open to learning whatever would enhance your walk with the Lord. When you face a health issue approach it with a teachable spirit. Ask if there is something God particularly wants you to learn through your illness, disease, etc. One of the things I learned during my 5-day hospital stay was a greater appreciation of what it was like to be on the other side of the bed rails. It gave me insight into what patients were feeling and how I might be more effective in caring for those in hospital.

Of course, coping with an illness is an opportunity to develop deeper dependence on the Lord. Sometimes God uses it to reveal indifference or carelessness in our walk with Him. It could be a specific area of disobedience He wants to draw to our attention. Last week I mentioned those in Corinth who were sick and some of whom had died because of sin (1 Cor 11.28-32). Sometimes a physical setback helps us grow in patience, or perseverance, or steadfastness, or have our faith tested to see if it is real. Illnesses can expose where we turn in times of crisis – do we turn to God, or away from Him when our life is on the line? Whenever you face what could be a crisis, pay attention to your spontaneous response. If it isn't to the Lord, make it a matter of focused attention and examine your relationship with the Lord.

Approach illness with a teachable spirit, seeking to hear from God and have Him nurture and build your faith.

4. Seek Divine Healing

While God typically utilizes medical science and their abilities and expertise in healing people, He however, is not restricted to that by any means. There clearly are times when He intervenes and divinely heals people.

James 5:14–15 (ESV) ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? 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. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Let me draw several points to your attention in these verses. First, the one to initiate anointing and prayer by the elders for healing is the one who is sick. Second, make note of the plurality of elders. Richard Siple, former pastor of Hillsdale Alliance in Regina and one who strongly supported divine healing pointed out that healing is a gift to the Church rather than to a specific individual. Since several elders are involved, a single individual isn't credited with healing. God is the One who heals. Third, the elders are to pray over the individual and anoint him or her with oil which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

A couple in one of the Churches we served in was sensing God's call to overseas ministry. However, a big concern was their pre-school daughter who was very unwell. She couldn't keep food down; doctors weren't able to resolve the ongoing issue. They called the elders of Church to anoint their child with oil and pray for her healing and God healed her. The couple went overseas and spent at least two decades in fruitful ministry in the Middle East. They are now involved in local Church ministry and to my knowledge the problem their daughter had, never recurred.

5. Pursue Victorious Living

All these points are integrated, but this one especially ties together with ***Fostering a Teachable Spirit***. Make it your ambition to live victoriously, no matter what. The older we get the greater the likelihood we will encounter a health issue. Many of the issues we encounter as we grow older are here to stay – some of them are more serious than others. People live with conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, congestive heart failure, strokes, and failing eyesight and hearing. Many have long term conditions of one sort or another that will follow them to the grave. An ever-increasing number face cancer – in many cases the treatment is effective and the cancer is effectively dealt with. In other cases, the cancer goes into remission for years. But for some, the cancer slowly and steadily steals their life away. If you haven't been directly affected by cancer, you undoubtedly know someone who has.

And sometimes a very debilitating or life-threatening illness doesn't wait until people are old – sometimes it is children, or young men and women who should have their lives ahead of them, but they don't. Friends of our son and daughter-in-law in Ontario have a

teenage daughter with terminal cancer. Those who have faced, or had a loved one in a similar situation, know the pain involved and the inadequacy of answers. I am reminded of a young woman who was committed to the Lord and was diagnosed with cancer. Fortunately, or so it seemed at the time, it was a type of cancer with an very high treatment success rate. Additionally, she was firmly persuaded of divine healing and was certain God would heal her. Many Churches made her healing a matter of much prayer. We held special times of prayer and fasting for her healing. But within only a few months her condition worsened and it became apparent that apart from God's immediate supernatural intervention she would die. To the very end this young woman believed she would be healed, but she wasn't. The fact is, we don't know why God heals one, but not another. Sometimes a very ungodly person, who doesn't have any interest in the things of God, is seemingly miraculously healed, while a young, Godly individual who is enormously gifted, dies all too young.

Sometimes too, irrespective of age, after much prayer God makes it clear He isn't going to heal someone, for example, Paul's thorn in the flesh (2Co 12.7).

As varied as the circumstances are, the response is always the same – pursue living victoriously despite ongoing health issues; draw closer to God – seek His enabling strength. Refuse to follow the wish of the enemy and turn away from God. Use whatever God gives you for His glory. Sometimes it is also helpful to remember the many times God intervened and protected us from illnesses and diseases – something we didn't really notice and took for granted.

The bottom line is – walk with God in His strength & for His glory!

May God minister to you as you listen to the following song. The first version doesn't have the lyrics on the screen while the second one does.

Gaither Vocal Band - ***I Know Who Holds Tomorrow***

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWLM3asMiGo&ab_channel=GaitherVEVO

I Know Who Holds Tomorrow - with lyrics

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFpyeFC-Pc4&ab_channel=mellowtouch429