Tuesday's Touch …#39

…from Pastor Ed …October 20, 2009

Sickness, Healing, and the Flesh – Part 2

Means of Healing

Bless the LORD… who heals all your diseases. Psalm 103:2-3

Pray for one another that you may be healed. James 5:16

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 1 Tim 5:23

Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. 2 Tim 4:20

All healing comes from God. That is, there is no process of healing regarding any infirmity that is not given by the grace of God. To recover from a cold is as much the healing hand of God as is the miraculous restoration of sight. Mature faith trusts Him to do that which he has purposed for good regarding our afflictions - whether to heal, and by what means, or whether to give grace to abide in faith through our infirmities. This by no means implies a fatalistic view. Rather, as we *fervently* pray for our need, we are encouraged in the sure knowledge that our Father always does what is best. It is never a lapse of faith to pray, "Not my will but Thine be done." Such a prayer implies complete trust in the wisdom and personal care of God and is one of the highest expressions of faith.

Now concerning the means the Lord may use, there are three primary avenues of healing: (1) The 'natural' healing processes of the body which God has incorporated into our creation; (2) medical means such as medications or surgery based upon the knowledge which God in grace has revealed to man; (3) and, of course, the immediate 'miraculous' touch of God. I, like many, have personally experienced all three of these means. I have recovered 'naturally' from many viruses, infections, and lacerations; I have also had to take medications to help with various ailments, acute and chronic; and I have been healed instantaneously (miraculously) from a long endured physical affliction by the unquestionable presence and touch of the Lord. I may not always be able to explain why He chooses to heal certain problems while others I must continue to endure, but I trust that His ways are always perfect. I rejoice in healing when it comes (by whatever means), and I also give thanks (though I confess with varying degrees of enthusiasm) when He chooses instead to give me grace to endure.

Paul, in conjunction with His apostolic calling, was used to heal many people. Yet, he writes to Timothy, one of His dearest friends and "son in the faith," and tells him to use a medicinal agent (a little wine) to help with his chronic stomach problems. This little verse speaks volumes on the subject we are entertaining. Consider:

1. Paul does not insist that Timothy must be holding on to some unconfessed sin that is causing the affliction or preventing his healing. This does not deny that unconfessed sin could be behind some sicknesses, but it clearly was not the case with Timothy.
2. He does not rebuke him for a lack of faith, telling him that if he really believed hard enough God would heal him. Biblical faith is never something we can "work up" or "psych ourselves" into. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word of God.
3. Timothy is not told to rebuke Satan in the name of Jesus that he might be healed. Again, whatever role Satan may play at times in sickness, this was not Timothy's answer.
4. Paul does not tell him to seek out someone with the 'gift of healing.' In fact, with the *possible* exception of the Apostles, the *gift of healing* is nowhere found in the scriptures as an abiding power given to any individual to use at will. If this were the case, then the most logical action for Timothy would certainly be to find such a person. It is interesting that the term *gift* attached to *healing* is always used in the plural – gifts of healings (1Corinth 12:9, 20), or gifts of healing

(1Corinth 12:30 ?). In the biblical narrative no one is specifically said to have or to exercise *the gift of healing.* In any event, Paul, who *was* used to heal many people, did not (could not) heal Timothy, and he is not encouraged to seek out someone who could.

5. Finally, Timothy is not told that, since God chose not to heal him directly, he must endure the affliction with patience, trust God, and not seek any 'natural' or 'man made' solutions. Instead he is told to use a medicinal agent. This clearly implies an endorsement of medical means. Also consider, as primitive as medical knowledge was then, Paul yet refers to Luke as the "beloved physician." He could have commended Luke in countless other ways, but he chooses rather to link his commendation with Luke's medical profession. It is also true that many (if not most) of the uses of the word *oil* in the New Testament refer to its use as a medicinal agent.

Now some feel that to use medical means to alleviate pain or affliction will circumnavigate God's purpose for their suffering. As mentioned previously, our Lord does use times of trial and suffering for our good and His glory. However, He is also sovereign in our appointed times. There are many medical cures today that were not available to the saints of the past. Because they had to suffer in particular ways does not mean that it is wrong for us to avail ourselves of the God-given medical knowledge we have in our times (with discretion and prayer, of course). There will, in this present world, always be plenty of suffering to endure. We need not be concerned that by using medical means we will somehow miss out on the suffering that God has ordained.

So, when we are faced with sickness, disease, injury, etc, the following course of action is biblically appropriate:

1. Always *first* consider the spiritual aspects, praying for wisdom and discernment. Address any spiritual concerns or failures. Confess known sin. Be reconciled to others whenever needed and possible. (Matt 5:23-24; 1Corinth 11:29-32; James 5:16)
2. Pray for healing, and enlist the prayers of brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those in pastoral leadership. (James 5:13-16)
3. Consider the medical means available, if any, and prayerfully implement them as is appropriate. (1 Tim 5:23; Luke 10:33-34)
4. Be willing to accept the grace to endure graciously that which is not healed, or is delayed in healing. (2Corinth 8:10)
5. Give God thanks in all things. (1Thess 5:18)

We must not be remiss in praying fervently for the healing of the sick, including at appropriate times when the church is gathered. But may we do so with biblical discretion, humility, and reverence for the Lord. Let us never add to the burden of the afflicted, but be able comforters in the Holy Spirit whatever the answer to our prayers.

Our Great Savior,

Be greatly glorified among your people in much healing, and in the gracious enduring of many afflictions. Teach us truly to give thanks in all things.

Ever trusting…,
Amen

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