

J. KYLE PAISLEY MEMORIAL FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord's Day Morning Sermon Notes

17th September 2006

Read: Genesis 3: 9-24

The Christian and Healing

Mankind instinctively clings to life. In every rational mind there is the knowledge that life is precious; that life should be preserved. Thus, within the human heart there is the natural desire to enjoy a lengthy healthy life. In the OT we meet with King Hezekiah, the godly king of Judah, who found himself at the very doors of death but who pled with God to spare his life and the Lord did so. It was not that Hezekiah was afraid to die or afraid of what followed death. Rather, it was the case where as a relatively young man life was precious to him and he wished to live a while longer in this world to serve the Lord. Then in the NT we hear Paul's testimony that when he began to endure what he calls his *thorn in the flesh* – some form of physical affliction: he earnestly sought the Lord for deliverance from it. While the Lord did not remove the affliction but gave Paul the grace to bear it, nonetheless it is apparent that Paul would have appreciated a life free from that particular physical affliction, teaching us that it is natural and instinctive to man to desire life and be healthy and well.

The reason for this innate desire for life and health is that originally man was not made to die. As he came forth from the hand of God, man was not subject to death, which means that he had a perfect body with perfect health. Therefore, man's subjection to death and all that causes it is not natural; it was not within the Lord's original scheme of things in the creation of man. According to the manner in which he was made by God, man would have enjoyed and counted a priceless precious matter the life he had been given. Consequently, even though man is a fallen and sinful creature, that natural instinctive enjoyment of life remains, meaning that within him there is an equally instinctive repulsion against death and the sicknesses and illnesses that lead to it.

However, as we are all aware, man is subject to death because of the Fall and the entrance of sin. Therefore, he is also subject to those aberrations in his body that lead to death. Disease, illness & sickness of all kinds are the lot of this earthly life; and we are all fully aware of this situation. However, this awareness results in the medical battle that rages on throughout the world of mankind against disease and sickness. Again it must be said that due to the way in which he was created, man's instinctive desire for life impels him to take measures to preserve life by fighting disease through research and discovery of that which will bring healing. And all of this legitimate pursuit of preserving health is commendable and is supported by the Scriptures of truth.

However, in referring to the issue of preserving our physical health and well-being, there arises the question of what the Scriptures actually teach on the matter of *healing* – a topic that receives incredible interest in many religious circles. I commented last week when preaching on the subject of *NT Tongues* that within the circles where there is a great emphasis on tongues, there is also a fascination with the issue of healing. One of the main errors promoted in such circles is the teaching that *sickness is never God's will for His people*; and that *all sickness is from Satan* -- a denial of the doctrine of the fall of man and the placing of the curse on all creation. Note the words in Gen 3: 19 – “*dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.*” Ponder these words carefully – they were the announcement by God that man's disobedience and sin had introduced the situation where physical life in this world for every individual would cease at a certain point. But think of the import of these words – they clearly infer that as a result of a certain process man would return to dust. What is that process? It is the process that involves one way or another, the experience of sickness, disease, ill-health etc, culminating in death itself. Note therefore –

(a) **The subjection of man to sickness and death was imposed by God because of man's sin**

It is a denial of Scripture to teach that the devil placed the curse on the world, including sickness and death. Rather, it was God who withdrew the special blessings that made Eden paradise, and changed the whole course of life by a single judicial pronouncement recorded here in v.v. 16-19. While Satan instigated the fall of man, the curse that was imposed was God's judicial act and His righteous judgment for man's disobedience and sin.

(b) **Note also that the whole human race is subject to the curse.**

The sorrows, trials, sickness, calamities of this life all stem from the fall and are experienced alike by all men, saved & unsaved. All mankind, believers and unbelievers, share the same fallen earth, the same altered physical life, the same propensity to sickness, the same hostile disease ridden environment, and the same susceptibility to death, 1 Cor 15: 22 – “*In Adam all die.*” The teaching here is clear – all men, saved or unsaved, are subject to disease & death by virtue of their natural union with Adam in the Fall and in sin.

(c) **Therefore it is wrong to teach that the Lord gives the promise of indefinite health to His people**

Charismatics teach such, pointing for example to Exodus 15: 26, “*I will put none of these diseases upon thee...for I am the LORD that healeth thee.*” On the basis of these words it is taught that since it was God's will to give good health to Israel then it is His will to do so today. However, such teachers conveniently leaves out the opening words where God speaks to Israel as a nation and commands them to keep His commandments and on this basis He promises that He will protect them from the virulent diseases that the heathen suffered. In other words, this promise of health was made only to Israel as a nation for that time and was conditioned on their obedience.

(d) **It is also wrong to teach that it is always God's will to heal**

The Lord sometimes grants a healing touch but the inference of Gen 3: 16-19 is that any healing in this life is limited & temporary. Man is destined to decay & death thus it is utterly misleading to teach that it is always God's will to heal. Note John 5: 3 – vast numbers of sick people were lying helpless by the pool of Bethesda. Christ came by that way, but He healed only one of that vast throng, v.v. 5, 6, & 8. Plainly, it is not always the will of the

Lord to heal. Here is the great Healer Himself, but He passed on and left all but one in their helpless state. Paul was not healed of his thorn in the flesh, though he sought the Lord for it. Timothy had many infirmities along with a stomach problem, but was advised to use medical help, 1 Tim 5: 23; 2 Tim 4: 20.

(e) **Moreover, it is also wrong to teach that sickness is the immediate consequence of some particular sin.**

Those in “healing” circles have to recognise that sickness comes upon God’s people. But to try to defend their erroneous notion that it is *always* the will of God for His people to be healthy, they account for the sicknesses of the saints as being *always* due to sin; sickness is an immediate punishment for some personal sin. As noted, sickness in the world is due to man’s original disobedience. Moreover, there are examples of disease coming upon various individuals due to sin – Miriam for her murmuring against Moses, Nu 12: 10; Uzziah for his intrusion into the priest’s office, 2 Chr 26: 21. The same is seen in the N.T. – John 5: 14, 1 Cor 11: 30.

However, it is not true to teach that sickness is *always* due to sin in the sense of being the immediate consequence of some particular sin. Consider Job’s sufferings. One Charismatic leader, John Wimber (now deceased), in a vain attempt to support the error that sickness is always due to sin, is on record as having stated concerning Job – “*Job is the one exception...*” i.e. to the notion that sickness is always due to sin. The Charismatic would not dare to teach that Job’s affliction was due to sin, since it came for the very opposite reason – his godliness. But then Wimber tries to dismiss Job’s case by saying – “*most of his suffering was not sickness.*” This is a gross misrepresentation of Job’s case. Job greatest suffering actually was a protracted season of physical suffering & mental anguish. Therefore, Job actually provides the classic case that sickness is not always due to sin.

The fact is that there are many seen to be walking with God, yet suffering physically. Jacob’s mortal sickness, Gen 48: 1; Elisha’s “*sickness whereof he died...*” 2 Kings 13: 14; the godly king Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20: 1-3 – note how Hezekiah could actually plead that he had been walking with God as he prayed for divine intervention. Note a classic example of the fact that sickness was not always due to sin – 1 Kings 14: 1, 12, 13: this child Abijah died of some sickness, but not because he had sinned. Remember also the lads who fell sick and died and were raised up by Elijah and Elisha – 1 Kings 17 & 2 Kings 4. In the N.T. there is ample evidence that sickness among believers was not a always sign of divine displeasure. See John 11: 3, 36 – the language here underlines the Lord’s love for Lazarus not displeasure, yet Lazarus became ill and died. Paul’s physical suffering, his thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor 12: 7 – it was given to him by the Lord, not because he had sinned, but to prevent him from sinning!

(f) **However, deliverance from sickness & death is promised in the Gospel.**

Note in Gen 3 also the great promise of v.15 – a promise of the Redeemer and the reversal of the curse instigated by Satan. This reversal of the curse includes deliverance from all the consequences of the Fall, including sickness & death. This is what Paul means in Rom 8: 23 where he speaks of the believer groaning in anticipation of the redemption of the body. By using the word *redemption* Paul is teaching that this deliverance of the body comes as a result of the atonement made by Christ. However, the crucial issue in view in the light of this verse pertains to the time when the body of the believer comes into the experience of the redemption that Christ has purchased for it.

Isaiah 53 4, 5 – where *griefs* is the translation of the Hebrew word for *sickness*; note also that Isaiah says that sinners are *healed* by the sufferings of Christ; that in His suffering and death Christ not only bore the punishment that is due to our sin, but that He also made provision for the removal of the consequences of sin, including *disease, suffering, and physical death itself*. In other words, in His atoning death Christ purchased full redemption for His people, including the redemption of their bodies from the effects of the curse.

But what we must see is that this redemption is not wholly available now in this life. All that Christ procured for His people is not available now or made good to His people in this world. The most notable example is deliverance from death – it is yet future, meaning that Scripture does not lead us to expect unlimited health and guaranteed healing for the body in this world. Thus, this benefit of the atonement in the form of physical well-being lies in the future when all sickness, decay, disease and death will be swept away forever. Even when the Lord heals someone today it is only a temporary measure for that individual will again succumb to some other sickness and die. Our mortal bodies must wait for their full and future deliverance from the effects of the fall. It is in that sense that Paul writes here where he speaks of the “redemption of the body.”

1. **Regarding this future redemption there is a day.** See Eph. 4: 30, the reference is to Christ’s coming when God’s people will enter into the final phase of their experience of Christ’s redemptive power; into the enjoyment of vast spiritual riches & unending spiritual pleasures of which they know nothing on this earth. In this world very little of the saints’ inheritance is enjoyed or even seen. God’s people are still subject to sin, infirmities, suffering and to common human ills. But there comes a day when that will all change – the day of redemption. Then the saved will appear in glory, and the unsaved eternally lost will see them in their glory, Matt. 8:11, 12; 13: 41-43.

2. **Regarding this future redemption there is deliverance.** Deliverance from the *power of death*. Christ died to deliver sinners from death, Heb. 2:15. While the Lord tarries, the saints pass to heaven through means of physical death. But that death has no sting; for their souls go to be with Christ and their bodies are still truly united with Christ. Then at the day of Christ those bodies are raised – this is deliverance from death’s power.

It will be deliverance from the *prospect of death*, 1 Cor. 15: 26; Rev. 21:4. This redemption of the body will be a full transformation into the likeness of the glorified body of Christ Himself, Phil. 3: 20, 21, 1 John 3: 2. What is this but the ultimate result of the Gospel? Christ redeemed the body in His substitutionary death; Christ will bring final deliverance for the body at His return; a complete transformation will be given. A body incorruptible, glorious, powerful & spiritual – given by the second Adam to all who trust Him.