

Maranatha

Christian Healing



By Dennis Wrigley

Wholeness

The Gospel is about making people whole. Our mission as Christians is to heal and to be healed. We are all damaged bruised people in need of the healing which only God can give.

Health is a state of wholeness. It is rooted in complete obedience to God. It flows from a right relationship between man and God which thus creates a right relationship between individual men and women.

Alienation from God destroys harmony in life and there is a close biblical relationship between healing and forgiveness. Sickness often but not always flows from wrong relationships and from an inability or refusal to give and receive forgiveness and love.

All healing comes from God and there can be no healing without complete obedience to God who is our Father. It is the obedience of Jesus on His Cross which reveals to us the way of healing - "*it is by His wounds that we are healed*" (1 Peter 2.24).

The Hope of healing is the message of the Bible. The crooked will be made straight. The rough place will be made smooth. Tears will be wiped away. The blind will see. The deaf will hear. The lame will walk. The dead will live. The hungry will be fed. Wars will cease. The desert will blossom as a rose. We live in a fallen sick world and the basic root of our sickness is a global rejection of God's rule by man. We choose war rather than peace, corruption rather than honesty. We pollute rivers, the seas and the air. In a fallen world there is a profound inter-relationship between the disorders of society and the sickness of individual men and women, whether in body, mind or spirit.

The Rule of God

When God rules His will is done. We believe that the complete healing of all our sickness will occur when God's Kingdom is finally and completely established in this world. Healing is a sign of the Kingdom. Jesus commanded "*Heal the sick and say to them that the Kingdom of God has come near to you*" (Luke 10.9). The Gospels are full of accounts of the healing ministry

of Jesus - "*The power of the Lord was present to heal them*" (Luke 5.17).

The evidence of healing is presented in the Gospels as a sign of God in action. God has compassion upon us. We read in Matthew 14.14 "He had compassion on them and healed their sick".

The healing ministry of Jesus is evidence of His Lordship. He says "*my actions as a representative of my Father are my evidence for my claims*" (John 10.25).

Jesus made a specific promise - "*these signs will accompany those who believe; in my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;they will place their hands on sick persons and they will get well*" (Mark 16. 17-18).

The Twelve were sent out to "*preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick*" (Luke 9.2). The 72 were sent out in pairs with the instructions "*heal the sick who are there and tell them the Kingdom of God is near you*" (Luke 10.9).

The word healing in many respects is synonymous with the word save. Jesus is Saviour and Healer - saving us from our sins and diseases. He comes to make us whole - He comes to heal us as individuals, as families, as communities and as nations.

Healing - the role of the Church

When Christians show the power of love to the world there is always a response. Healing was a characteristic of the life of the early Christians. In James 5.13-16 we read "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well".

There is considerable evidence to show that the healing ministry has continued without a break throughout the history of the church.

Miraculous healings have been attributed to countless Christian healers including Origen, Athanaseus, Basil, Gregory of Nazinaus, Benedict, Gregory of Tours, Bede, Antony of Padua, Edmond of Canterbury,

Richard of Chichester, Thomas of Hereford & Catherine of Sienna. Justin Martyr (100-165) speaks of many Christians healing and "driving the possessing devils out of the men". Irenaeus (140-203) writes of Christians healing the sick "by laying their hands upon them and they are made whole". Augustine (354-430) wrote "it is a simple fact that there is no lack of miracles even in our day".

In later years great leaders of Christian revival exercised the healing ministry. These included St. Francis of Assisi, Peter Waldo, Valentine Greatlakes, John Wesley and William Carey. Since Vatican II there has been a deeper understanding of Christian healing in many countries.

The Epistles clearly teach us that the gifts of the spirit include healing, miracle working and discernment. (1 Cor. 12. 8-11). We are clearly taught that we will be enabled to do those things which before were impossible - *"after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power"* (Acts 1.8)

Our Prayers for Healing

When we pray for healing we must always do it in the name of Jesus. We take his authority over all dis-ease.

The Church, the people of God, are called to be the Body of Christ and, therefore, to be used to heal. We stretch out our hands in the name of Jesus. The praise of the church inevitably brings healing. The fellowship of the church enables God's love to heal.

The challenge of the church is that Jesus says to his members *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than this because I am going to the Father"*. (John 14.12)

It is important to recognise that we can be healed without being cured and that we can be cured without being healed. Much physical illness is beyond our understanding and neither can we fully explain the nature of some miraculous cures. One thing, however, is certain that goodness can flow out of suffering. The actual pain can be redemptive as the sufferer discovers the presence of Christ in the immediate situation.

The Wounds of the Past

Countless people are deeply hurt and perhaps crippled by the wounds of the past. When all their years are offered to God, as in the 'Life Prayer', they are enabled to present their hurts to Him and to be freed from the captivity of the past whether conscious or subconscious.

Bonds which have been formed with past situations, past relationships and past generations can be cut in the power of Christ and people set free. Bondage to a past event can be broken by placing Christ within it. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are led to identify key experiences of pain in past years and to declare and receive forgiveness and love in the name of Jesus.

The process of healing is often a process of learning to love ourselves. This is best done by recognising that we are called to love ourselves because God has first loved us by giving us His own Son and by allowing Him to be sacrificed on a Cross. On His Cross Jesus cures all the sickness and sin of the world and, therefore, in coming to Him we come to the one who fully understands our immediate situation.

Through Christ we are reconciled with God and therefore with one another. Reconciliation is at the heart of the healing ministry.

Our Hope for the Future

As Christians we are called to be hope-filled people. When life-long enemies embrace we see the gift of Hope. When the weak are given strength we see the gift of Hope. When there are miraculous signs and wonders, we see the gift of Hope. Healing Christian communities will inevitably bring hope to those within and those around. Hope-filled Christians will always be the instruments of healing. God uses hope-filled Christians to heal and change the world.

The Starting Point

The starting point of all healing is our love for the Father. Flowing from this is our love and respect for others and for ourselves. If we do not love, all else is in vain. If we are to be used for healing we must have a

deep and loving compassion for others, a hope-filled acknowledgement that God will bring healing and a faith which is assured that to God nothing is impossible.

We are called to pray with the total conviction that *"you have it already, it will be yours"*. (Mark 11.24) When Peter doubted he began to sink. (Matthew 14. 28-31)

Spiritual Warfare

Involvement in the healing ministry inevitably draws us into spiritual warfare. Our struggle is *"against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"*. (Eph. 6.12) The expulsion of demonic influence is a central part of the ministry of Christ. We deal with demonic attack in His name and by the power of the Holy Spirit. We claim authority in His name over all that oppresses. In our healing ministry we need to recognise that spiritual oppression is the root of much illness.

The Will of God

It is the will of God that we are totally healed in body, mind and spirit. We, therefore, ask Him to go to the root of our disorders.

We bring all who are in pain and illness and perhaps despair to the foot of the cross where Jesus transforms our suffering into blessing. It is through His wounds we are healed. Paul Claudel emphasises *"Jesus did not come to explain suffering but to fill it with His presence"*. God does not promise freedom from pain or suffering but He does promise to give us the power to overcome. Jesus pledges His continuing presence with us *"surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age"*.

The overwhelming love of Jesus Christ for each one of us brings us healing. When we discover that He loves us, that He knew us in our mother's womb, that He calls us by our name we have reached the starting point of our healing.