

9. The Bible and Health

Biblical material: Matt. 4:23; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 6:4, 9-11; Phil. 4:4-9; Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8-10.

Quotes

- I've never met a healthy person who worried much about his health or a good person who worried much about his soul. *Bernard Haldane*
- We know a great deal more about the causes of physical disease than we do about the causes of physical health. *M. Scott Peck*
- Life is not merely being alive, but being well. *Martial*
- Thinking is the most unhealthy thing in the world, and people die of it just as they die of any other disease. *Oscar Wilde*

Questions

Why is health important in relation to the Bible? How does health relate to spiritual issues? Why do we spend so much time dealing with issues of health? How does the concept of health fit into the great controversy? Are healing and salvation related? What does the health emphasis say about God and his intentions for us and the whole universe?

Discussion/Comment

“Healing and restoration are often talked about in the Bible. God’s promises to restore Israel spill forth in language filled with healing and curative terms (*Jer. 30:12-17, 33:6, Ezek. 47:12, Mal. 4:2*). So clear is the affinity in the New Testament that one of its principal words for healing (*soteria*) may be translated as either ‘healing’ or ‘salvation.’ Salvation, then, may include not only rescue from sin and its consequences but also restoration, healing of the whole person.” (Monday’s lesson).

God’s revelation of salvation through Jesus is expressed in terms of divine healing of the sin-damaged individual. It is no coincidence that after being announced as the God-revealer (John 1:18), Jesus spent much of his ministry in acts of physical healing. Jesus told those around him: “When he [a man] looks at me, he sees the one who sent me” (John 12:45 NIV) and “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:7, 9 NIV)

In the announcement of Jesus’ birth, the angel tells Joseph, “She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21 NIV). Note that they are saved from their sins. Not a prescription as to the judicial absolution of sins.

But there is something far more important here. As already noted, Christ’s main method of demonstrating God to the world was through acts of healing. “Wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.” (Mk. 6:56 NIV). All perfectly clear. A wonderful description of the healing emphasis in the life of Christ.

But that word “healed” in this text hides a greater truth. The verb is the Greek word *sozo*. Which is the exact same word as used to describe salvation! So Matthew’s description of Jesus noted above could be translated “Because he will heal his people from their sins.” Why? Because in this case the word used for “save” is *sozo* too.

The insight that salvation means healing is essential to a proper understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus. When blind Bartimaeus shouts out to Jesus, asking to receive his sight, Jesus replies: “Go, your faith has healed you.” (Mark 10:52). “Healed”? Well, it could as well be “saved”—for the word is *sozo* again. For through Jesus’ healing he was saved; receiving God’s salvation he was healed. As Jesus walks towards Jairus’ house, messengers come to inform him not to bother continuing his mission. The girl has died. But Jesus turns to Jairus and tells him: “Don’t be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.” (Luke 8:50 NIV). The girl was dead, and Jesus speaks of healing? Yes, says Jesus, she can be rescued from death by Jesus the Life-giver, she can be saved from death. And in order to be saved, she would have to be re-made, made well again, totally healed. Healing is salvation again, as demonstrated by the word *sozo* again.

This essential meaning of salvation as healing is demonstrated by those words of Jesus to the healed woman: “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” Just one chapter previously Jesus is recorded as saying to the woman who anointed his feet: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” (Luke 7:50 NIV). In the Greek, Jesus’ announcement to the two women is identical, since it uses the word *sozo* which is translated as “saved” or “healed” as the context dictates.

Consequently, that famous verse in Ephesians 2:8 which describes God’s salvation could have the word “saved” replaced by “healed”: “For it is by grace you have been healed, through faith...” Or in other words, “by the graciousness of God you have been healed by trusting God.” That is what Jesus Christ came to do. To win our trust so that because of his gracious nature he could then heal (save) us. This nature and desire is illustrated by the many miracles of healing, restoration and cure that Jesus did during his ministry—revealing God as the one who wants to heal us, not just physically, but spiritually.

As God said to his people of old, “I am the Lord who heals you.” (Exodus 15:26). This is his salvation—healing all the wounds of sin, curing the sickness of evil, and restoring us once more into full spiritual health: remade into his glorious image. This is his salvation, so fully and freely demonstrated in Jesus and made available to all who will.

Text comments

Jesus is recorded as healing every illness—how does this relate to our choices? (Matt. 4:23). Jesus announced a healing ministry (Luke 4:16-21). Spiritual death and resurrection is likened to physical healing. (Rom. 6:4, 9-11). Joy is a healing factor. (Phil. 4:4-9;). Healing of our mental attitudes is very much a part of this God-directed process. (Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8-10).

Ellen White Comments

In the medical profession there are many skeptics and atheists who exalt the works of God above the God of science. Comparatively few of those who enter worldly medical colleges come out from them pure and unspotted. They have failed to become elevated, ennobled, sanctified. Material things eclipse the heavenly and eternal. With many, religious faith and principles are mingled with worldly customs and practices, and pure and undefiled religion is rare. {CT 478}

Eternity is not to be lost out of our reckoning. The highest education is that which will teach our children and youth the science of Christianity, which will give them an experimental knowledge of God’s ways, and will impart to them the lessons that Christ gave to His disciples of the paternal character of God. {CG 296-7}

