

## 8. The Atmosphere of Praise (2Q 2010—Health and Healing)

**Biblical material:** Gen. 1:1, 2, 9–12, 20–26; Ps. 104:29; Dan. 5:23; Luke 15:7; Rev. 21:4.

### Quotes

- Healing does not mean going back to the way things were before, but rather allowing what is now to move us closer to God. *Ram Dass*
- There is no coming to consciousness without pain. *C. G. Jung*
- We are healed from suffering only by experiencing it to the full. *Marcel Proust*
- Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope. Anon.
- One should not go into church if one wants to breathe pure air. *Friedrich Nietzsche*
- Who will tell whether one happy moment of love or the joy of breathing or walking on a bright morning and smelling the fresh air, is not worth all the suffering and effort which life implies. *Erich Fromm*
- He lives most life whoever breathes most air. *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

### Questions

Why is air and its quality important in a spiritual context? How do we draw parallels about this “atmosphere of praise”? Why does the Bible speak about “breath” as a symbol of life? How can we ensure our bodies operate at best efficiency in terms of the air we breathe? What should we be doing about maintaining our part in God’s creation?

### Bible discussion

The Biblical image of the animating power of God is “breath”—this is the “spirit” that God gives us, and is linked to that very obvious sign of life—breathing. God breathed into man and he became a living being (Genesis). When God takes away this breath, people die (Psalm 104:29). God holds our lives in the palm of his hand (Daniel 5:23). For this reason we should clearly identify God as our Creator and Sustainer, and the one worthy of our praise. When it comes to the physical aspects of health, pure air is created by God and maintained through the plant/oxygen system, part of God’s glorious creation in which we dwell.

### Comment

“The study so far this week has emphasized the *physical* properties of the atmosphere that God created for His family on earth. We use the word *atmosphere* to describe not only the physical environment of air that surrounds us, but also the attitudes, feelings, emotions, support, and affirmation of those around us, which create an atmosphere that may be positive or negative.” (Thursday’s lesson).

How do we draw parallels between wise physical advice about breathing pure air and our spiritual life? What is most important for us to “breathe spiritually”? Isn’t it something about making sure we have a clean, pure picture of God?

Not only through the words he used, the parables he spoke, the descriptions he gave. Jesus’ ministry of healing speaks eloquent volumes of the God he came to make

comprehensible. Every blind man that saw, every crippled that leapt for joy, every leper made clean, new and whole spoke of the God who heals, remaking sinful human beings in His image once more.

His very life became the vehicle of God's self-expression—from birth through the temptations to the cross itself. As Jesus so clearly emphasized:

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” John 3:14 NIV.

“When you have lifted up the Son of Man then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.” John 8:28 NIV.

“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” John 12:32 NIV.

And as this last text goes on to say, “He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.” (John 12:33 NIV). Not just a crucifixion, not just a public spectacle, but a revelation of the character of God that would draw all to Him.

Which is why John could say, writing with hindsight and under inspiration: “No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.” (John 1:18 NIV).

This is the true reason for praise. We see the direct results of trusting God for healing, as did the people physically healed by Jesus. That's why they praised him!

### **Ellen White Comments**

In a short time you will so realize the benefit of exercise and pure air that you would not live without these blessings. Your lungs, deprived of air, will be like a hungry person deprived of food. Indeed, we can live longer without food than without air, which is the food that God has provided for the lungs. {CG 339-40}

Vigor declines as years advance, leaving less vitality with which to resist unhealthful influences; hence the greater necessity for the aged to have plenty of sunlight and fresh, pure air. {AH 149}

Many have been taught that night air is positively injurious to health, and therefore must be excluded from their rooms. One autumn evening I was traveling in a crowded car. The exhalations from so many lungs and bodies rendered the atmosphere very impure, and caused a sickening sensation to come over me. I raised my window, and was enjoying the fresh air, when a lady in earnest, imploring tones, cried out, “Do put down that window! You will take cold and be sick; the night air is so unhealthful!” I replied, “Madam, we have no other air than night air, in this car or out of it. If you refuse to breathe the night air, you must stop breathing...” The free air of heaven, by day or night, is one of the richest blessings we can enjoy.

Fresh air will purify the blood, refresh the body, and help to make it strong and healthy. The invigoration produced will be reflected upon the mind, imparting to it tone and clearness, as well as a degree of composure and serenity. It gives a healthful stimulus to the appetite, renders the digestion of food more perfect, and induces sound, sweet sleep. Living in close, ill-ventilated rooms, weakens the system, makes the mind gloomy, the skin sallow, and the circulation feeble; the blood moves sluggishly, digestion is retarded, and the system is rendered peculiarly sensitive to cold. {CTBH 104}