

Faith and Healing (Part 2)

Our Responsibility in Healing

John W. Ritenbaugh

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Today I am going to continue the series I began three weeks ago. This series is pointed toward a better understanding of a narrow application of the very first series of commands that God gave to mankind. Their importance to us within God's purpose cannot be underestimated without damage being done to our growing and overcoming. The principle involves "working." Once one understands the importance of the application of these commands, one can better understand why Satan is so insistent about diminishing the importance of works.

God's first commands to mankind involve replenishing the earth. Replenishing gives the sense of growth and expansion. Then comes "dressing," which indicates tending and cultivation. And then comes "keeping," meaning guarding and protecting what comes into our possession, be it life itself, knowledge, property, or our calling.

These are all broad areas of responsibility to be sure, but if Satan can get us so self-centered as to be lazy, uncaring, irresponsible, bitter, depressed, or feeling victimized, or anything that will make us listless, drifting, without vision, and essentially directionless, he can destroy God's purpose for us.

Do we understand that God's very first series of commands involve working? Before there was any giving of laws of conduct, any explanation of purpose, any sense of sin, grace, redemption, Savior, justification, sanctification, or glorification, *the rule of working* is the first thing expressed.

Are you one of those who believes, even for a moment, that Jesus did it all for us because He was "God with us"? Do you believe because He lived a perfect life, and thus His sacrifice qualifies for the forgiveness of our sins, that this relieves us from the responsibility of having concern for the keeping of God's laws?

Let me give you an illustration of what could possibly be an every-day type of situation. This might actually be considered a joke because it is so obviously simple. John Reid passed this on to me, and he in turn got it from Robert Barron's mother while he was on a visit there in the Phoenix area.

It seems that a couple was at an automobile dealership trying to buy a new car. The dealer had so many tempting choices that the couple was torn between this one and that one. They could not make up their minds. It was at this point that Jesus walked into the showroom. He immediately perceived that they were having difficulty, so He asked them if He could help by taking one of the cars they were considering out on a test drive, and then He would give His recommendation. They agreed to this, and so He hopped into the car, and off He went.

While He was gone on the test drive, He kept every law and every courtesy of the road. He never broke the speed limit. He never tailgated anybody. He signaled at every intersection. He

never ran a yellow light, let alone a red one. He never burned any rubber at getting a jackrabbit start when the light turned green.

Finally He returned to the dealership. He approached the couple and the salesman with whom they were still discussing the purchase. Jesus said to the couple, "I think you ought to buy this one. It is just right for you." Well the couple was delighted and they thanked Him profusely. But, as He turned to leave them, He said, "By the way, when you get out on the road with your new car, do not worry about keeping any laws because I have already done that for you."

This simple story captures the essence of what the "no law" people teach. These "no law" people teach that once one's new life in Christ begins; one no longer has to be concerned about the keeping of God's law. But that concept is so far off the mark it is incredible! The Bible teaches us that life has purpose to it, and that purpose creates the vision upon which we expend our energy working to fulfill.

God is creating children in His image, and this means that when He has completed His act of creation, in cooperation with us, we will most certainly not be on the same level of authority, but we will be like Him, having the same world view, the same model of morality, and conducting life the way He does.

History and our own experience teach us that this is not happening now. The Bible shows the need for a Redeemer-Savior, a calling, a clear revelation of God to those who are called of the purpose. It requires repentance and change of direction in life by those called to God's way.

Now how is this making of us accomplished?

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or no. And He humbled you, and suffered [allowed] you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live.

Do we understand the essence of the instruction Moses gives here? In an overall sense he is saying that from the time God calls us out of this world until the preparations for the fulfillment of God's purpose in the lives of those called shifts into high gear, that God, as Creator, purposely designed some difficult events to prepare us to live to be like Him and to live like Him. The books of Proverbs and Hebrews show that He chastens every son that He loves. In Philippians 2, Paul adds that we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

The Kingdom of God is not a socialist state in which the government supplies cradle-to-grave coverage for every concern of life. However, it does supply every need for God's purpose. This

sets up many interesting possibilities because God's purpose frequently runs counter to what human nature naturally wants. God's purpose is drawing us toward true liberty. This liberty is one that is *within* law, not *from* law. It is a liberty that protects the self and society from the corrupting affects of sin.

By contrast, history provides us with overwhelming evidence of socialism's abuses of human liberty, if only from the recent experiences of Germany and Russia. But what is so sobering and horrifying is that, despite all of the easily available evidence of socialism's failures, all of the Israelitish nations have plunged themselves into the same enslaving system, with the United States being the last to fall to its stultifying, indeed deadly, incentive-destroying grip.

On the other hand, by way of contrast, theocracy is a form of government based in the principles of virtue held by both the government and the governed, and the standards for virtue when the governed are established by the laws of God, who is the ultimate in virtue and in government. James calls it "the law of liberty."

It was this pattern the founding fathers of the United States followed when they wrote the Constitution of the United States. They did this because, to whatever degree they believed the Bible, they saw in it that form of government—a democratic republic that would produce the most and best life, liberty, and prosperity for the individuals and the nation. But, (and this is a *bigbut*) for this to work, it absolutely requires that the virtues based in, held, and produced through the laws of God as revealed in the Bible be in both the government and the governed. But this in turn sets up the possibility of a major problem for the United States, and it is why John Adams said that the American Constitution will only work with a Christian people.

If the citizens, whether part of the government or part of the governed, have their faith in God and the Bible destroyed, the nation will crumble into being no different from any other nation of this world, because with the loss of faith the people will no longer *work* to live up to the virtues established by Almighty God and the Constitution of the United States. And that, brethren, is exactly what is happening. It takes *work* to live up to the virtues of our God. It does not happen by magic. It does not happen automatically.

One of the things that Deuteronomy 8:1-3 teaches us is that you can be sure that God will make certain His children believe Him and are continuously demonstrating that faith by their works during their lifetime through overcoming their nature and coming out of sin. God *will* test and prove us.

The Constitution of the United States does not guarantee success for anybody, but it does guarantee the *opportunity* for success. That is a big difference between the two. It does not promise immunity from the circumstances of one's birth, or the bad circumstances produced by others' bad choices, but it does promise the opportunity to overcome them. Christians must understand this because dealing with God is very similar for those of us striving to fully enter the Kingdom of God at Christ's return.

But unlike what the Socialists tend to proclaim as a major goal of theirs, God is not seeking to equalize everything in life. God does treat all of His children fairly, but He does not treat them necessarily equally. Now consider this: Is everybody as wealthy as Abraham or David? Is everybody as gifted as Joseph, Daniel, or Paul? God hands out gifts as it pleases *Him*, and

everybody is not treated equally, but fairly for what God is creating them. Does everybody have the same degree of wisdom as Solomon? (Sometimes I wish I had a lot more of that.) Has everybody had the same wonderful experience of walking and talking and interacting with Jesus for three and one-half years? Only twelve men had that experience.

"Oh! God is not fair!" Yes He is, but He does not treat everybody equally. We have got to come to grips with this. I bring this up because human nature can be very easily offended, becoming jealous, envious, depressed, and even aggressively defensive, thinking that it has been shorted, slighted, victimized by circumstance, and bitter about its lot in life. Eventually, under the influence of that kind of negative thinking, one gradually loses faith and patience, and what once may have been considered to be the unutterable, becomes a reality. God is blamed, and human nature uses this as a justification for failing to live up to the virtues established in God's Word.

In God's children, living by faith will be the acceptance of circumstance, but that acceptance will not be passive. It will work. Patient? Yes! Passive? No! God's children will face the circumstance and patiently and diligently work to overcome it, because they know and believe there is a purpose being worked out in their life. They know and believe God is creating a family over which He fully governs, and that each member of that family will have the same virtues He and our Savior Jesus Christ already possess.

This circumstance that must be overcome is designed to prepare God's children for filling a place prepared for them in God's kingdom by Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus said to His disciples, "I go and prepare a place for you." That includes us as well. And for preparing a place, we have to be prepared, but it requires our cooperation. It is going to require of us working toward an end that we might not have clearly in mind while it is going on.

Those in God's kingdom will have proved their responsibility to always submit to Him by their works while still in the flesh before ever passing completely into His kingdom. We are looking here at a major aspect of God's virtues.

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work.

If you have a modern translation it very likely says, "My Father is working, and I work." That word "hitherto" is an old English expression that we do not use anymore, (at least I have not seen it for a long time), but it gives the impression of past, present, and future. It gives the impression of continuity. In other words, God started working in the past. He was working at the time of Jesus and He is still working now. It is a continuous operation.

Let me make a bit of a conclusion here and that is, that among other things, God is creating children who work like He does. It takes work to overcome the difficulties that He allows or deliberately brings into our lives. Do you remember what it said in Deuteronomy 8: 1-3 that God made them hunger? That was an example of a difficulty. He wanted to see how they were going to deal with it. Well, if He did that to them, how much more is He going to be working with you and me, because the stakes are considerably higher?

God allows, or deliberately brings into our life, difficulties. We might call them assignments—things that we receive in school, things that we receive on the job. These things contain difficulties that we are responsible to Him for working toward overcoming. Now it is toward *that* end, you see, what God is working for that God's government will provide.

Let us not forget what Richard explained in his series of sermons on works, that works encompass everything that has to do with Christian living. The world kind of gets a person narrowed into "works" being the keeping of the commandments, but it is *not* just that. It includes the *work* of studying, the *work* of prayer, the *work* of fasting, the *work* of giving a soft answer, the *work* of controlling one's temper, the *work* of being patient, kind, helpful, generous, and on and on. Everything that constitutes Christian virtue is included in that word "work," and all along the line we are required to put on these virtues.

I want to go back to Proverbs and remind us all of the verse that started this series.

Proverbs 18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster [or destroyer].

We learned in the first sermon of this series that everything in creation is running down. It is degenerating. It takes work to maintain it and to build it up. Do you remember that added phrase that appears in the Septuagint, and also appears in the Amplified Version of the Bible? That last phrase says, "He who does not use his endeavors to heal himself is brother to him that commits suicide."

What impression does the word "endeavors" give you? Action? Activity? Work? "He who does not work to heal himself is brother to him that commits suicide." That is just a broad insertion of something there, but I think I am okay in using that expression. I stated in the previous sermon that whether or not this phrase actually does appear in the originally inspired Hebrew is in one sense moot because it does catch the essence of what the first phrase states.

The principle instruction of this verse is saying that God does not want children who just sit there doing nothing. Now if Christ really did it all for us, then a huge percentage of the verses in the Bible which *He* inspired would have absolutely no practical application toward the Kingdom of God. Why even have all of that in there if it has already been done? Why do we need that instruction? Why do we need to be reminded of those things? It is because we are *todo* them and that is work—*Christian work*.

God wants His children to be actively involved in solving their problems and taking care of what has come into their possession. Taking care is just another way of saying "dressing and keeping." That previous sermon used the taking care of the physical body as the example showing this principle in a common situation. It is so common that it is required of God for every human being, converted or unconverted. However, for the sons of God, it is a requirement of special importance because our body is the temple of His Spirit.

We are going to take this instruction one step further, and I feel that it is a natural step. Now what does the Bible have to say about our responsibility regarding healing?

Isaiah 53:1-6 Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

This of course is a very famous prophecy about, and the description of, and what results from Christ's unjust punishment and death for us. What I am most interested in at this time is, what do you believe is included within the statement that appears in verse 5 where it says "and with His stripes we are healed"? Is it referencing spiritual healing only, or physical healing of the body only? Or is it applied to both? In the Worldwide Church of God it seems that we applied it almost exclusively to the healing of the body.

Now is healing something we are to work at? Does spiritual healing require some measure of work on our part, but regarding physical healing we are to do nothing? The answer to these questions is actually easily discerned simply by using Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and following the Hebrew and Greek word translated into English forms of the word "heal."

The Old Testament uses only one Hebrew word exclusively. The New Testament uses at least four different Greek words, all translated into the word "heal" or "healing" or "healed." These words are used in a wide variety of circumstances, and if translated more carefully into modern English words other than the very broad "heal," "healing," or "healed," they indicate shades or variation that include: to make whole, to make well, to cure, recover, tend, to regain, remedy, restore, repair, mend, and give help. There may be more, but that gives you a pretty good idea that those words in the Hebrew and Greek have very wide application. These words are most certainly not used exclusively for the healing of the sick and deficient human body.

First we are going to go back to the New Testament to Matthew 13 where there are a number of parables.

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

This most assuredly is referring to *spiritual* healing.

Luke 4:23 And he said unto them, You will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in your country.

Here the word "heal" is exactly the same word used in Matthew 13:15, and here it could be taken in either case—spiritual or physical—but the context seems to indicate more strongly again He is talking about *spiritual* healing.

John 4:47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

This is the same Greek word used in Matthew 13:5 and Luke 4:23, but this time it is used directly in the healing of a child *physically*. As you are beginning to see, the words are not going to tell you a thing. It is the context that is going to tell you what is going on.

Let us go back to the Old Testament to Jeremiah 17. I think this one is rather interesting. Jeremiah says:

Jeremiah 17:14 Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for you are my praise.

What Jeremiah is doing here is praying. What is so interesting about this context is that it is in the same context as Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" If your Bible has a marginal reference, it will tell you that "desperately wicked" means that it is "incurably sick." The heart is sick. Verse 9 is actually helping to set the stage for Jeremiah's prayer. If you looked at the thing in the whole context, Jeremiah was enduring a difficult trial and his request for healing can easily be seen as containing a plea for rescue and restoration through the trial, and that his heart be healed so that he does not fall as its victim as others are. This is a decidedly *spiritual*-healing context. There is no indication that Jeremiah is physically ill at all.

Now we are going to go back to another familiar one in Numbers 12.

Numbers 12:13 And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech you.

It might be interesting for you to know that this is exactly the same word (translated here "Heal her") that appeared in Jeremiah 17:14, but the context here shows clearly that Moses desired Miriam to be *physically* healed of the leprosy. So you see, the same word is used by God to indicate either spiritual healing or the healing of the body.

What I do not want you to forget is that in the spiritual healing we all agree that *work* is required as our cooperative part of the process. In terms of physical healing, do we just throw

out, and we do nothing? I am going to an extreme so that we can see what is involved here. If you did nothing after God called you and granted you repentance, and you received God's Spirit, and then did nothing, would you expect to be healed of your spiritual infirmity? I do not think so. Well then, why do we tend to make qualifying stages or levels, or whatever, in regard to physical healing?

Let us go on to another interesting one. This one is in Psalms, and as far as I know, it was written by David.

Psalm 60:1-5 O God, you have cast us off, you have scattered us, you have been displeased: O turn yourself to us again. You have made the earth to tremble; you have broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shakes. You have showed your people hard things: you have made us to drink the wine of astonishment. You have given a banner to them that fear you, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. That your beloved may be delivered; save with your right hand, and hear me.

That word "heal" in verse 2 is the same word used in Numbers 12 and also in Jeremiah 17. David is using an earthquake in a figurative sense to illustrate what has happened to his world. But interestingly, he asked God to heal this metaphorical earthquake. Maybe the family was fractured in some way. Maybe the government was under attack. The superscription seems to indicate that it was something like that where David was fleeing for his life. Now it could have been that a real earthquake was involved, but the sense is that this was an earthquake of social proportions.

I think the conclusion regarding Isaiah 53:5 has to be that one cannot rely on the translation of any Hebrew or Greek word translated "heal," that it applies exclusively to either the healing of a spiritual *or* a physical ailment. One has to search the context. Our discernment has to be focused on the context; thus "heal" used in Isaiah 53 indicates that Christ's stripes are involved in both.

We have also been taught that in every healing there is some element of faith, but the implication drawn from the illustration given to support that teaching almost invariably leads to the conclusion that if one is not healed, then the fault lies with the one anointed and prayed for. That conclusion is not true. It is true that in every healing there is some element of faith demonstrated, but that faith was not necessarily possessed by the one who was healed. We are going to see a very clear example of this in Acts 3:1-9.

Acts 3:1-9 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive

something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none: but such as I have give I you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

Here is an exceedingly clear example that the healed man was not even *looking* for healing, and the context indicates he had absolutely no idea who Peter and John were. Who had the faith? In this case it was Peter and John. Faith was exhibited, but not by the person healed.

Let us go to John 11: 39-44. I think here is the penultimate in healing.

John 11:39-44 Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto him, Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days. Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, you should see the glory of God? [Notice the doubt as we go through here.] Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. And I knew that you hear me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that you have sent me. [I think He perceived a great deal of doubt, "that they may believe."] And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Now certainly Lazarus did not have faith, so his faith can be discounted. We have already seen two examples of people healed, and they had no faith at all at that place in time. If we would look at the entire context, we would see that nobody involved demonstrated any faith in what Jesus did to him because they did not grasp His intent. They were mystified. Now who had the faith? Jesus did. Faith was present, but it was not in the person who was healed.

On the other hand, the faithful heroes of the Bible all died. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the apostles, and others you can name, all died. Are we going to conclude that these great people of faith like those mentioned, and many besides them, did not have faith enough to be healed at the end of their life?

I am saying that there can be faith all around. There can be faith in the person who does the anointing and faith in the person who is being anointed and requesting the healing. They can both have very good supreme strong faith and yet there is no healing. To find fault with these people because they died—fault that maybe they did not have faith—is not good judgment. The proper conclusion has to be that even though faith indeed plays a part in all healing, the truth

of the matter is that all healing is in the hand of God. As the Sovereign Ruler of His creation, *He* decides who is healed, and He decides *when*, according to His purpose. Our responsibility is to trust Him, whether or not the restoration occurs as we desire.

I saw something that was attributed to Mother Teresa, the Catholic lady of Calcutta, who did so many great works. She said something that I think shows a great deal of wisdom in things like this. She said, "Whenever I am in trouble, I do not pray to God to remove me from it, but to make me faithful." Do you get the point? She understood. Our responsibility is *to trust* God.

John 9:1-5 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night comes when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Another element regarding faith and healing is that the ailment's cause is very frequently thought to be sin. This is not necessarily wrong. In fact I personally believe that the overwhelmingly majority of the times it is the correct conclusion; however, as we can see here in John 9, it is not always true. One of the clearer examples of this might be Job in the Old Testament. It was not sin that brought those terrible afflictions upon him, including some sort of boils or carbuncles, or whatever that were all over his body. That must have been awfully, terribly painful, and yet God's own record of what was going on said that Job was upright. Some Bibles translate that "blameless."

Job was the victim, if I can put it that way, of God's desire to create something in him, and to create a book from which we can draw a great deal of wisdom of working our way through trials. That is the very thing we are talking about here. Job could not do anymore than just sit there but his mind was going. He and his three friends had some pretty hot discussions about things, with him defending himself all the time, saying, "I did not sin. If there is anything I am guilty of it is doing a lot of good works." (I am shortening things up here.)

What I want us to see in that is an example of someone who was not guilty of causing his physical condition. But Job was not passive. He was thinking, thinking, thinking all the while that this was going on.

There is something else very important that we can learn here. Though those arguments Job had with his friends undoubtedly clarified some things in his mind regarding life and his conduct of it, it was not until God stepped in and revealed the truth of the matter. Beginning in chapter 38 and continuing on for almost four chapters, Job got the point, and it says he repented. What did he repent of? He was not guilty of sin, but he was guilty of not understanding, of his lack of knowledge. What I want you to see from this is that though that trial went on for a good while, Job was faithful, and secondly, God *did* step in and clarify the situation. He did not give Job a fully complete answer, but it was enough for God's purpose at the time.

I bring this up because as we work our way through the physical sicknesses and the spiritual sickness that we all have, we are not always going to have the answers. We will not know why this is going on, but if we are faithful like Job was faithful, God will step in and clarify things. And not only that, He will sustain us until *His* purpose is accomplished for that trial, as He did with Job.

Considering what the Bible clearly shows on this point, I think that one of the most positive and practical understandings that we can receive from this is that we must be very careful about making critical judgments about why or why not people are healed. This does not mean that we cannot analyze, questioning what we are observing, but it must always be done with the over-arching understanding that it is the Sovereign God who gives or denies healing as *He* sees fit, according to His purpose for that individual.

Nobody, brethren, can demand a healing from God. God does not owe us a thing. Nobody can force God. Nobody can twist God's arm into healing them because they *claim* to have exercised faith and have been obedient. Healing is not like going into a restaurant and ordering it because it is on the menu. Now God is indeed merciful, but requesting healing sets in motion more complex elements than appear on the surface. Poor Job did not even know that Satan was at the bottom of his trial. He did not see that with his eyes anymore than we see Satan with our eyes. But do we see God? Do we believe that He will never leave us nor forsake us, that He is the God who is there, and that we are not really alone?

Nobody can force God. God is indeed merciful, but requesting healing sets in motion sometimes very complex elements. This becomes more evident I believe as we age and mature in the way, because it has been my observation that the most dramatic of healings occur when a person is *new* to the faith. Did you ever notice in the Bible that as the apostles aged healings disappear entirely from the scene?

So what does one do if one is anointed and God does not appear to be healing? Should one just lie there and die, waiting in faith? Now that is an option, but I do not believe it is the correct one given what Proverbs 18: 9 says. Now consider this. Is healing any different in our relationship with God than any other problem? The answer to that, in principle is, "Not much." It is just a problem.

God promised to bring Israel into the Promised Land, but they had to walk there. The fact that God gave a promise did not exclude the strong possibility that they had to do something despite the promise. God divided the Red Sea, but the Israelites had to walk through what must have been a terrifying learning experience.

Have you ever thought about walking through a watery canyon that may have had walls of water out there that were hundreds of feet high, all moving around and maybe fish flopping out, and you are wondering all the while, "Is that water going to come crashing in on us?" They had to walk through that terrifying canyon—the valley of the shadow of death—on both sides.

Now God promises to supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ, but that does not exclude our having to do something, because the book of Philippians says we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

If you lose your job and you ask God to supply you with a new one, do you just sit there waiting for an employer to knock on your door and invite you to work at his place? It will not work. Brethren, healing is no different. It is promised, but it presents wonderful opportunities for serious learning. Look at the understanding of God in our relationship with Him and Job's experience.

If the body is broken by sickness, we should seek Him. He commands us to seek the elders and be anointed. If the body is broken by sickness, one must seek God's mercy, cooperate with Him, and take steps to fix it. In other words, just because the problem is one involving faith and healing, this does not eliminate our responsibility to continue right on dressing and keeping anymore than the promise of salvation. They involve work, but with healing the focus of a problem has shifted to a very personal and perhaps a very painful and terrifying anxiety-producing problem. But healing follows the same general process one would follow with every other problem. However, it may be a great deal more physically and spiritually complex as was Job's experience.

Those of you who have been in the church for quite a while will recall that we established certain spiritual criteria regarding what was permitted in treating ourselves, and what was not. For example, many believed that using a natural herb to help one's self was okay, but a manufactured pharmaceutical one was not. The reasoning was because it was not from God. Going to a naturopath or a chiropractor was okay, but using a medical doctor was not. Well, these things were believed and practiced with all sincerity, but the basis for that approach was read into the Scripture where it did not exist.

I can remember hearing excuses for the appearance in the Bible of "Luke, the beloved physician." Now brethren, think about this. Why was he not called "Luke, our beloved *brother*" instead of "Luke, the beloved physician"? Well, he was called that because he was practicing his profession *after* his calling and conversion within the church just as surely as the apostles were practicing exactly what *their* title "apostle" claimed. He was practicing. How extensive it was, I have no idea.

Another notion held by some was that injuries and afflictions to the exterior of the body were *our* responsibility, but if something internal that might require surgery occurred, it was God's responsibility, and we were treading on holy ground that would reveal our lack of faith if one opted to have surgery.

Another belief was that one could have something on the body repaired, but removal of an internal part of the body was forbidden. For example, one could have a hernia operation that would repair a damaged muscle wall, but to surgically remove a malfunctioning or a no-longer-functioning gall bladder was unspiritual.

Please understand that I am not ridiculing these notions. I am saying that they are built on nothing spiritual, and if they are privately held beliefs, so be it. A person is going to have to live with the results of that belief, because the Scripture does say, "According to *your* faith, so be it unto you." But the Scripture does not require that body of beliefs in order for us to be healed because healing, in the long run, is a demonstration of God's mercy. It is what *He* chooses to do that is important for us.

All of these practices may indeed have differing physical values. Please understand this. They have different physical values, but assigning them *spiritual* value goes beyond what the Scripture shows. Is a chiropractor of greater spiritual value than a medical doctor? Does a gall bladder have more innate spiritual value because it is inside the body than a finger or an arm because they are on the outside of the body?

Is an herb more spiritual than a pharmacist's medication, and are wine and oil more spiritual than iodine and soap? The difference between a naturopath and a medical doctor is in their approach to the solution of your problem. It is a *physical* difference, and that may make all the difference in the world to you, and that is fine. I think that we can understand that physically an herb is more gentle and slower acting than pharmaceutical concoctions. Wine and oil and iodine and soap perform the same function, but they may have different physical values. These things do need to be taken into consideration, but please do not assign them spiritual value.

American doctors tend to be more radical than do doctors from other parts of the world in their analysis of problems and their treatment of them. I think it is partly because Americans are so impatient. They want it "right now." That needs to be taken into consideration because those doctors may want to do things to you that are downright dangerous, but that is your decision.

I want us to see that in regard to healing, our approach is to be little different in spiritual principle than for any other problem of life. First we seek God, asking for His merciful intervention, His guidance, and providence. Secondly—and I cannot emphasize this enough—is that we have to begin working on a solution. Now why that is necessary will have to be a subject for another sermon. I think that some of the scriptures I have turned up in preparation for this series you will find very interesting in regard to God's approach to using medications and to using physicians. It is right there in the book.