

## Faith and Healing (Part 3)

### God's Promises Do Not Absolve Us Of Working

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In the first sermon of this series we covered a general responsibility regarding the care of the body. In short, God gave us life. It is not something we have by right. It is not something inherent, and we are responsible to Him to care for it. Now just like the Earth that is our general environment, we individually must dress and keep ourselves.

We also saw in that sermon that the whole creation, including each and every one of us, is in an inexorable state of deterioration, and so the responsibility of dressing and keeping never ends. In youth this deterioration is barely noticeable to most, but it still must be taken into account because it is nonetheless occurring. To some it occurs faster and to some slower. It is in middle age that the gradual deterioration becomes a more constant cause for concern, and by old age it is so apparent that it cannot be avoided. The Christian however, regardless of age, has a special accountability to God because his body has the additional blessing of being a temple of God's Spirit.

In the second message we began exploring the next natural step: What is one's responsibility when the body breaks down due to sickness? This particular dressing and keeping responsibility has an added twist to it because of God's promise to heal. We also saw that God's promise to heal includes *spiritual* healing too.

In light of that promise, is the healing of the body any different from any other problem that might come into our life in terms of responsibility and works? In other words, does the promise of healing relieve us of the responsibility of doing something to remove the *cause* of the sickness and to make ourselves better? Let us answer this by asking a parallel question. Does God's promise to heal spiritually relieve us of the responsibility of working to remove the cause of any *spiritual* illness we might have or, put in another way, to overcome and grow?

The answer is obvious and makes clear the proper answer to the promise regarding the healing of the body. We *are* responsible for taking steps to heal the body, but how far does our responsibility go? The answer: How far does the responsibility to heal ourselves *spiritually* go? Brethren, we are to do whatever we can do.

We saw in Deuteronomy 8 that there are times when God deliberately designs and places into action difficult circumstances for us to deal with and that these situations are assignments instituted to teach us that man does not live by physical things only, but by every word of God. In other words, these assignments are, among other things, to teach us through experience, to trust Him.

These assignments require spiritual *and* physical works to deal with problems, but *always* with trust. For example, God promised to bring Israel into the Promised Land, but they had to do the physical works of walking in order to get there. What if they had just lay down and say, "God,

get me there!" Would they have made it? No! That was not an easy responsibility. It was a daily burden. It is interesting that in some places in the Bible God talks about "the burden of the Word of the Lord."

God parted the Red Sea so Israel could escape the army of Egypt, but the Israelites had to follow Moses through that God-created canyon of water. They did so, but undoubtedly with quite a measure of anxiety lest those walls of water would come crashing down on them. Thus the physical work of walking serves as a metaphor for all the spiritual works it takes to prepare us to be in the Kingdom of God.

That sermon was leading to an inevitable conclusion that healing, though promised by God, is no different from any other problem of life. God is involved with us even as He was involved with ancient Israel every step of the way to the Promised Land. His promise held true but that does not absolve us of working to repair whatever diseased state our bodies are in, while at the same time trusting God as we proceed.

It is right here though that many of us went off the track in our former fellowship by assigning spiritual values to physical elements. Thus herbs were assigned as better spiritually than were prescription pharmaceuticals. Naturopaths and chiropractors were assigned better spiritually than were medical doctors.

Certain operations could be done to the outside of the body but to cut into the body was spiritually off limits. A whole body of levels of spiritual values came into being, and one was being spiritual or unspiritual, according to how one measured against these non-biblical charts of values.

I was personally witness to a man who had what we commonly call "water on the knee." He went to a hospital to have the fluid drained in order to relieve the painful pressure. When the minister heard of this, he promptly disfellowshipped the man for his lack of faith. Consider this: Wine and oil are not more spiritual than iodine, soap, and water. Some people would do virtually nothing to improve their diseased or injured body lest they violate their faith.

I want you to understand that I am not mocking at all of this because it was done with the utmost of sincerity, but what was believed and done was something that was added to the Scripture—a practice that does not have its source in the Bible, as I will show you as we go through this sermon. What God does not want is for us to leave Him and His purpose out of any aspect of life. This includes the good times and the bad times.

In that second sermon we saw Jesus stating clearly that both He and the Father are working. God's work is creating children who have the same virtues that He has, who work in the same manner that He does, and who have the same perspectives on things that He does. We do not work on the same level as He does but we are to work with Him on the same project He is involved in, following the patterns He establishes in His Word. That project is us being created in His image.

In His wisdom God has deemed that this project requires we learn the processes of the workings of His law. Thus we must deal with laws experientially and not just theoretically in the actual circumstances of life, including those times when we face the effects of dealing with

disobedience to those laws.

Do you remember the proverb that says, "He that does nothing to heal himself (physically or spiritually) is like him who commits suicide"? Suicide is self-murder, thus breaking the Sixth Commandment, and we do not want to do that. We must do something about our health when it is in some way damaged.

What we see in God's Word is God's method of healing and this requires that we trust Him to supply our needs within His purpose. This way is so far superior to mankind's healing methods that operate without His involvement there is no adequate comparison.

In that message we saw that some measure of faith in God is involved in every healing, but on the other hand sin is not necessarily involved in every sickness even though it most definitely is involved in the overall majority of them. Healing cannot be demanded of God. God is Sovereign, and all healings—every one of them—are given in His time and according to His purpose.

John 4:46-54 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. 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. Then said Jesus unto him, Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. The nobleman said unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your son lives. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, Your son lives. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Your son lives: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when H was come out of Judea into Galilee.

John does not say in verse 54 that this was a miracle. It indeed was a miracle, but the word John used translated, "miracle" is better translated *assign, mark, or indication*, and is so translated in almost every modern version. A sign points, giving direction, and God sometimes uses healings to show in whom and where He is working. Signs point to the Messenger and His message. Verse 54 should read: "This again is the second *sign* (or mark) that Jesus did when He was come out of Judea into Galilee." It was indeed a miracle that was pointing to where God was working. It was advertising Jesus as the One through whom God was working at that time.

Let us go back to II Chronicles 16:9. This is a very well-known scripture.

II Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.

I want you to notice what God says. He says He shows Himself *strong* through miraculous interventions. Now a healing, which is really the subject here, is an act of mercy God uses as a form of advertising, and at the same time, encouragement. It has more than one purpose to it. It is like He is saying, "I am with you." Not everyone is going to be healed in this instantaneous manner, but all who trust Him *will* be healed in His time and manner. This is a principle we must accept. He requires that we trust Him and He requires that we understand that He will do it in His good time when He sees it is best to be done.

Nobody can force God. Nobody can twist God's arm into healing because they claim to have exercised faith and have been obedient. Healing is not like going into a restaurant, ordering, and then having it served up. God is indeed merciful, but requesting healing sets in motion more complex elements than appear on the surface.

Even though Jesus had awesome powers, He stated to His disciples in John 14:10 that He did not speak on His own authority, but the Father that dwelt in Him, He did the works. The real power in Jesus' healings was the Father in heaven. Humanly, Jesus had no more power than any other man. Now trusting God does not exclude seeking and using the wisdom and skills man has gained. I am going to begin now to give you a number of scriptures that show this.

Let us go all the way back Genesis 37:25. The setting here is near the beginning of Joseph being sold into Egypt.

Genesis 37:25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

We are going to look at this word "balm." According to *The Reader's Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary* "balm" is an aromatic resinous exudation from various trees or shrubs used as a medicine. That same dictionary says that "balm of Gilead" is a resinous fragrant juice obtained from the balsam fir. This is the first appearance in the Bible of this word "balm."

Now we are going to go to Genesis 43. By this time we have gone through much of the story regarding Joseph, and now these negotiations are taking place between Joseph and the brothers. They have returned from Egypt to their father Jacob.

Genesis 43:11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds.

First let us notice who it is that is suggesting giving balm as a gift to an important personage. He did not know that it was his own son. He just looked upon this man as being one of the major rulers of the greatest power in the world at that time. Jacob was by this time in his life a godly person, and he surely knew something of God's promise of healing. Now if he and other

Israelites were not using balm because of God's promise to heal, why would he give a gift something considered as a violation of God's law?

Let us update this. Would you give someone who was an important personage, or maybe somebody you loved who was unconverted, a meal of jumbo shrimp and lobster? You would not do that because that would be a violation of God's law. Do we not think that maybe Jacob thought in the same way, that it did not seem strange at all for him to give medicine to Joseph? Apparently this balm was something that was known all over the Middle East for its healing properties.

Let us go to Jeremiah 8:18. Jeremiah is the speaker.

Jeremiah 8:18-22 When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt [Israel is hurting] of the daughter of my people am I hurt: I am black: astonishment has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead [is there no medication in Gilead]: is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

If we would look at this in its wider context we would have to begin all the way at the beginning of chapter 7. We would come all the way through it up into chapter 8, which is a continuation of a long prophecy that begins all the way back in chapter 7. It is given because of the diseased state of the nation of Israel. That prophecy explains what *isgoing* to happen, what *will* happen, and the *solution* so that it does not have to happen. By the time we get to chapter 8, in verses 8 and 9, God says this:

Jeremiah 8:8-9 How do you say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made He it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?

This is a succinct statement showing that even the wise men should have known why the dangerous circumstances existed, but they rejected God's Word.

Jeremiah 8:10-12 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace: when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they

blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the Lord.

In verses 8-12 the subject by this time has begun to shift to the solution. What the people needed was to be healed of their national problems. The wise men—those who were leading the nation—were wise in terms of worldly solutions and they applied them; however, their solutions brought about no curing of the real problem even though their solutions brought about a small measure of peace. That is why in verse 11 it says, "Peace, peace." There is a small measure of it, but it is not really there. Their solutions have covered over a few of the symptoms but they could not cure the disease. They could not cure because the disease was spiritual and lay in their hypocritical relationship with God.

Remember in verse 8 it said "the law of the Lord is with us," and yet they rejected the law of God, setting up a hypocritical relationship with God. The proof of their hypocrisy is evidenced by their rejection of God's Word even though they claimed to know God. So the solution—the medicine—lay in the rebuilding of their relationship with God, but *their* solutions never involved turning from their immorality. The people never repented.

Let us look at verses 21 and 22 again.

Jeremiah 8:21-22 For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt: I am black: astonishment has taken hold on me. Is there no *balm* in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

The answer, brethren, is *of course* there was a balm in Gilead! It lay in repentance. It lay in a change of attitude toward God and His Word that would heal the broken relationship, but neither the leaders nor the people would partake of it. Jeremiah accepted the fact that the people were taking medications for physical diseases, so why would they not use the spiritual medication of repentance to heal the spiritual disease?

This parallel approach was something that the people should have understood because they were using medications in life for their physical sicknesses. The strength of this illustration used by Jeremiah in his question is that *if* the use of medication is right on *one* side of the parallel (the spiritual), then it is also right on the other. If the illustration is misleading and wrong, then the illustration is misused, and Jeremiah is guilty of wrong instruction. But he is not giving wrong instruction because the use of a medication to heal a physical sickness is not more wrong than using a spiritual medication to heal a spiritual sickness. That is exactly why Jeremiah used it. We are going to see Jesus did the same thing in the New Testament.

In Jeremiah 46:11 he again counsels the use of balm. In this case he also advises right within the context that it will not work because their problem was spiritual in nature.

Jeremiah 46:11 Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shall you use many medicines; for you shall not be cured.

Turn now to Jeremiah 51. The subject here is Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:7-8 Babylon has been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

Jeremiah is giving us clues to show us that the taking of a medication is not inherently sinful.

We are going to go now to Ezekiel 27:17. This is a prophecy regarding Tyre. Tyre was the New York City of its day, and along the line here Judah is mentioned.

Ezekiel 27:17 Judah and the land of Israel, they were your merchants: they traded in your market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

To put this into a modern context, it would have to be the United States and other parts of the Israelitish nations dealing in medications. As I mentioned earlier, it looks as though this "balm of Gilead" was something that was known all over the Middle East as a medication that was good for the healing of certain injuries to the body, and both Judah and Israel were exporting it overseas.

We are going to turn now to Isaiah 38. This is a well-known occurrence. Notice the sequence of events here.

Isaiah 38:1-2 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus says the Lord, Set your house in order: for you shall die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.

Isaiah 38:20-21 The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.

This time it is not balm. It was apparently a poultice that was made from figs that must have had some drawing power to it used to suck a poison from Hezekiah's body. Notice the sequence of events here. Hezekiah sought God and Isaiah, so God's prophet Isaiah, at one point in time, used a medication. It was the medication of that day and it appears as though it was something that was fairly common for that time. God does not speak against it except to show that those physical things will not cure a problem that is spiritual. It is something that is physical, but He

showed He is not against people using it even though they sought Him first.

Let us go back again to Jeremiah 8 to something I just went over very lightly before, but we are going to emphasize it this time, and begin a string of other scriptures.

Jeremiah 8:22 Is there no balm [no medications] in Gilead? Is there no physician there?

Now what about doctors? Think of the circumstance. Jeremiah—God's prophet —apparently does not think that it is wrong to use a medication on a physical sickness. Now he is asking, "Do they not have a physician they can go to and get some advice and some counsel? Is there not somebody there to treat them?"

Again, remember the parallels we are dealing with here. On the one side is the spiritual, and on the other side is the physical. The parallelism that Jeremiah is using is that if it is all right to do it here, it is also all right to do it there. They cannot be separated. If either one of them is wrong, then the other one is wrong. But he is not approaching it that way. Now we have to consider this: Is it wrong to use a physician and to seek his counsel, and possibly also his treatment as well?

We have seen from the illustrations in Jeremiah 8 that the problem was the people were doing nothing to help themselves. That is an important piece of this. They were doing nothing to help themselves, and Jeremiah is encouraging them to do something to help themselves.

We are going to go back to the New Testament to Mark 5.

Mark 5:24-34 And Jesus went with him: and much people followed Him, and thronged Him. And a certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? And his disciples said unto Him, You see the multitude thronging you, and say you, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, your faith has made you whole: go in peace, and be whole of your plague.

Now Jesus is not outright denying anybody the use of a physician. He is not teaching that going to see a physician is a violation of one's faith in God. He is not saying that trusting God by faith and the use of a physician are mutually exclusive. In other words, He is not saying one cannot

seek both at the same time, and if one does, it will guarantee that person will not be healed. What is He doing? He is demonstrating that using one's faith in God and trusting Him is far superior to the skills of any man. See, up to that point of time, this woman had not sought God. It is essential we follow the sequence that Hezekiah did: God came first, and Hezekiah trusted Him.

Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.

Do you see what He said there? He said that sick people need a physician. That is awfully hard to get around.

Mark 2:17b I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus did here the same thing that Jeremiah did in Jeremiah 8. Those that are spiritually sick need a physician even as those who are *physically* sick need a physician. That His primary purpose in stating this is spiritual is certain. He could have said that those who are sick spiritually need the great spiritual Physician Himself, but He used the need of those *physically* sick for the skills and powers of a physician as the illustration for His spiritual teaching. There is a parallel there and Jesus clearly used it.

Now if the need of a physician for those physically ill does not parallel the need for a spiritual physician for those spiritually sick, then, at the very least, His illustration is mighty misleading. But He did not make a mistake. There is a parallel between the two, and He is clearly stating that He expects those physically ill to seek help from those who are more knowledgeable than themselves in this important area of life. The use of one's faith in seeking help from a physician is not mutually exclusive.

We are going to back again to II Chronicles 16. Notice the introduction here. Was there trust in God?

II Chronicles 16:7-8 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord your God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of your hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you did rely on the Lord [meaning that time], he delivered them into your hand.

What we are seeing here is the beginning of another parallel involving spiritual things and physical things.

II Chronicles 16:9-12 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of

them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein you have done foolishly: therefore from henceforth you shall have wars. Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house: for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time. And behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.

The lesson is very clear. If we would see the whole picture here, covering two chapters again, Asa began as a good king, but somewhere along the line something happened and he turned from God in a major way until he was persecuting those whom God sent. He was persecuting the seer there. He turned to such an extent that he went to the physicians for help without seeking God in the least. So what we see here is a major reinforcement for a major key: Do not leave God out of the picture of any part of our life.

II Kings 1:1-4 Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. [Where is God? Where are the Israelites' physicians?] But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that you go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus says the Lord, You shall not come down from that bed on which you are gone up, but shall surely die. And Elijah departed.

There is another example. Ahaziah left God completely out of the picture. There would have been nothing sinful in seeking a physician's counsel, and perhaps even his treatments, but Ahaziah's life had come to leaving God out entirely.

There is an interesting use of physicians in Job 13:4. Job is talking to his three friends there who are counseling him about his problems, and Job says:

Job 13:4 But you are forgers of lies, you are all physicians of no value.

This begins to open up an interesting area. In this case with Job—though he had a physical problem because Satan smote him—the real problem was something that was spiritual. Job repented of that, but here he was seeking help from his friends. Job's friends were in a position of a physician counseling him as to how or why the spiritual problem existed and how it could be overcome and healed.

We find from Job's reply that he knew very well that there were physicians of no value. We will get to more of this later, but I want to interject the thought right here that going to a doctor is never the complete answer. Who are they compared to God? Even the very best of doctors is nothing compared to God. There are going to be physicians of no value, and we have to be aware of that.

Turn now to Luke 8:43. This is the same occasion we just read of in the book of Mark.

Luke 8:43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.

In another place Luke is called "the beloved physician." I just want to pause a second here and ask, "Why, in God's inspired Word, did he not just call him 'our brother Luke'? Instead, he called him "the beloved physician." I will tell you why I think he was called "the beloved physician," and that is that after Luke was converted and was in the church, he was still practicing his profession. He was still a physician, and God calls him that title because he was doing his responsibility just as surely as the word "apostle" is the title applied to those God had appointed to that position.

The "beloved physician" here, inspired of God, says that the affliction this woman had was medically incurable in terms of the knowledge that was available at that time. She had gone from physician to physician seeking help but none was available to her, except through Christ. This is a valuable piece of understanding that again points out the necessity above all for us to fervently seek God because man's knowledge of the workings of the human body is limited. Human physicians are not God.

Human physicians are not the Creator who is working out a far more important spiritual purpose, and so the word regarding physicians (including naturopaths, chiropractors, homeopaths, and so forth) and all the counsel in the way of diagnosis, medications, and therapy, is *caveat emptor*. "Caveat emptor" came into the English language from Latin and means, "Let the buyer beware." In other words, buy what they have to sell in the way of counsel and in the way of medications and therapy at your own risk.

Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Proverbs 11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

I once read an article I believe was in *Time* magazine comparing the approaches of medical doctors in a wide variety of western world countries. The comparisons were clear that the American medical establishment's approach was the most radical and aggressive. The German approach was the most conservative. The other nations fell in between those two. American doctors were most likely to prescribe the latest wonder drug, method, and therapy. The potential for speedy recovery is often given very heavy primary consideration.

The Germans, on the other hand, were most likely to prescribe herbs rather than pharmaceutical medications, "tried and true" methods that are better understood and less risky, and slower approaches.

The difference between a naturopath and a medical doctor is in their approach to the solution to your problem. It is a *physical* difference. We have got to understand that. It is a *physical* difference. The herb or diet a naturopath may prescribe is generally more gentle, slower acting, with far fewer side effects than the powerful pharmaceutical concoctions of a medical doctor. Wine and oil, iodine and soap perform the same basic function, but are different in their physical values.

Some procedures used to correct a bodily malfunction are radical and very invasive in their approach, and others are more conservative and cautious. But again, the differences are physical, and it must be understood that every pharmaceutical a doctor is likely to prescribe presents some measure of the possibility of adverse reaction. This is why every medication carries a reaction warning on the label, and may even warn one to seek a doctor's counsel before taking it if one has such and such a condition.

What I am saying is that just because there is liberty to seek counsel from a physician, or a naturopath, or a chiropractor, or whatever, it does not mean that he is going to be right in his analysis, diagnosis, and prescription of treatment. That is why seeking a multitude of counsel may very well be indicated. It is the "two heads are better than one" principle.

There are, in many cases, physical differences between the actions, reactions, and effectiveness of a pharmaceutical or an herb. We must be careful to think things through as best we can. That is why it is good to begin preparing yourself for the time that you *do* get sick by doing as much reading as you can possibly spare to find out what works, what does not work, and so forth. Just understand that because we have the liberty, God is not giving blanket approval of everything that one might have available to treat one's self.

Men's understanding of the workings of our bodies, though growing, is still extremely shallow compared to our Creator. In addition to that truth, God is also conducting a spiritual creation in us to which He gives supreme concern. The physical, by comparison, is of virtually no importance. He can heal us instantly, but the spiritual growth is what He is after, and this is something that a physician barely considers and thus is at a very great disadvantage.

We are going to have to live with our choices. We are going to have to live with the *result* of those choices. This is one of the reasons why the scripture says, "According to your faith [your body of beliefs—what you choose to trust in], so be it unto you."

What I want us to see in regard to healing is that our approach is to be little different in spiritual principle than any other problem in life. First seek God, asking His merciful intervention, guidance, and providence. Secondly, we [and I cannot emphasize the "we" enough] must begin to work on the solution. We seek wise counsel both from God's Word and from people of experience. Third, we especially seek spiritual and physical repentance and change in order to quit adding to the problem. Whether it is a spiritual problem or whether it is a physical problem, we have to turn from what is wrong that might be causing or adding to the problem

There is one more facet to this that is important to understand. We are going to go back to Deuteronomy 28.

Deuteronomy 28:15 But it shall come to pass, if you will not hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you.

With that warning, let us drop down to verse 21.

Deuteronomy 28:21-22 The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto you until He have consumed you from off the land whither you go to possess it. The Lord shall smite you with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew: and they shall pursue you until you perish.

Now with those things in mind, which are not very happy things, let us go back to verse one.

Deuteronomy 28:1-3 And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, *if* you shall hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

We are going to look at another scripture that folds right into this one and it is the first time that healing is mentioned in the Bible. Turn to Exodus 15. Notice how close this is to Deuteronomy 28:1.

Exodus 15:26 And [God] said, If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that *heals* you.

From these verses I want us to notice that good health and healing, when one gets sick, are directly linked to obedience. Brethren, obedience means work. We cannot obey without *working* to obey. The principles that we have been dealing with in these three sermons are in an overall sense incredibly simple. They begin with the fact that from the very beginning God has required mankind to work, to replenish, to dress and to keep, but that work is to be channeled in a

God-commanded direction, and toward a God-ordained end. To obey those commands requires work and the expending of time, thought, and energy toward accomplishing them.

But sin *also* requires the works of expending time, thought, and energy toward accomplishing goals *apart* from God's purpose. Both involve works. Which direction are we going to go in? That is our choice.

The works of obedience provide both the evidence that one believes God, and at the same time instills the habits and character of God in our hearts. The works of sin provide evidence that one does *not* believe God, and instills habits and character different from God's. The one [the works of obedience] produces blessings according to God's purpose. The other [sin—the works of disobedience] may produce some material blessings, but they are vanity. They are worthless in terms of God's purpose.

God also promises that works of disobedience will produce curses, one of which is sickness. Sin is at the base of virtually all sickness, whether or not we committed them. When they occur we have to deal with them *in faith*, and with patience.

Please understand that exercising faith in healing is in no way passive. Patience is not passive. It is proactive and trusting of God and most definitely not filled with anxiety that He will fail us. Paraphrasing James, one can correctly say that *real* faith—*living* faith—works toward the right conclusion.

Now healing is a process that involves self-examination bent toward discovering these works of sin that have brought sickness on us. It involves the works of seeking through counsel to aid discovery and it involves serious heart-felt repentance. In this entire process, trusting and pleasing God is our primary object.

What I have proposed to you is that faith and works, as pertain to healing, are not mutually exclusive. Seeking to find out what our ailment is and taking steps to promote the restoration through repentance and change is not only good sense, it is absolutely required of God. It is part and parcel of the "dressing and keeping" responsibility. It is part and parcel of becoming like God. God is creating problem-solvers, not problem-continuers. He is looking for those who approach problems like He would if He were a man, and fixing things up.