

Sunday March 31, 2019
Rx For the Soul
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I hope everyone is feeling OK today, and in good health. What with winter doing it's best to hang on, and summer trying to muscle in on spring, at least here in Jacksonville. It's been a time for being sick. Lots of us have been out with one illness or another over the past few months.

For some the illness has been brief, maybe lasting just a day or two. A quick cold, or a touch of the flu. For others, like me, that cold held on for weeks, making each day miserable. And then there is the added stresses of our daily routines. All those necessary distractions that we have to get done to get through each day. So, the days drag by, our energy level drops lower and lower, and our minds become feverish, barely holding focus on our unending to-do lists.

We may end up so sick and stressed out that we finally say to ourselves: "I need an appointment with doctor Karen." We schedule an appointment, get our blood work done at a lab, and show up with hopes of a quick remedy.

Dr. Karen will do her best to help us out. She'll listen politely to our whining about every little pain. She'll check for a heart-beat to see if we're really still alive. She'll peer into the empty space between our ears. She'll even get that little hammer thing and whack us on the knee.

Then she'll study the results of our lab test with great amazement, checking references in her medical books. She may dust off her encyclopedia of rare diseases, or call a specialist for a second opinion.

Finally, she will look you in the eye, maybe even take your hand in a comforting way, and give you an impossible diagnosis, "You really need to get more sleep."

Winters can really be tough in Jacksonville. However, summer is just around the corner, and I hope we are all feeling healthy and fit as a fiddle because what I would like to have us focus on is not the state of our physical health, but

rather that of our spiritual health. Are we feeling spiritually strong and well? Or do we feel spiritually weak and run-down, unable to lift the burdens of the day, growing weary on our spiritual journey?

Have the distractions of life been piling up on us, and the obligations of each day stacking up faster than we can take care of them? Are the cares of this world hitting us with storm force winds, tossing us about like a ship without an anchor?

In this continual flow of living in this world, have we had that moment when we stop and lift or gaze up from our feet, and realize we have drifted from our faith and those things we have heard. Without even noticing it, we have let these distractions change the focus of our spiritual eyes, our eyes of faith, and we discover we have drifted miles from our safe haven.

Most Sundays, it is such a refreshment to my spirit to “assemble together” here, and get a break from the daily grind. In that I realize I’m living proof of the words of our Lord in *Matt 6:34* “*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*”

So then, what is the condition we find ourselves in this week? If our spiritual health is not where it needs to be, we can choose to go to God’s emergency room. And it doesn’t matter when because He is open 24/7, and your appointment time is always available. Wherever you are you can meet with Him; as it says in *Heb 4:16* “*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

So step into the exam room, pull the curtain around you. It’s just you and the Lord. Take Psalm as your cue and cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. *Psalm 139: 23-24* “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*” He sees everything about us anyway. *Psalm 34:15* “*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. And His ears are open to their cry.*”

His examination of our condition will come through His Word. Like an X-ray we only have to hold ourselves up to the light of His Word to see our true

spiritual health. *Psalm 119:9* “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word.”

And as we submit ourselves to the hands of the Great Physician, it is through the Word that He will cut away the illness and disease. *Hebrews 4:12* “For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” He will strengthen us in the inner spiritual man as His Spirit opens the Word to us. *John 16:13a* “However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth...” and *1Cor 2:9-10* “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God.”

Do we have any of these spiritual ailments mentioned here in *Rev 3:17* “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked –” Have we become exhausted and discouraged as we run this marathon race set before us? Do we need to take to heart the instruction of *Hebrews 12: 12-13* “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight the paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed?”

Let’s see how the Word of Truth will bring about the change in our spiritual health that we need. It’s summed up neatly for us in *2 Tim 3: 16-17* “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” We can have our spiritually out-of-joint hands and knees and feet put back in place and strengthened if we allow the Word that metamorphosis in us after this four-fold manner. These four parts will work together, one built on the next, and all together bringing about our completeness, spiritually strong, able for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the boy of Christ.

Part One:

The Word will teach us doctrine. This tells us the truth of what is real. How things are supposed to be. For example: *1Cor 2:10-13* “*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of man except the spirit of the man which is in Him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*” This tells us how we grow in the knowledge of Christ and His word.

Then Part Two of Timothy: Reproof

Or a reprimand or rebuke. This tells us where we are when we are where we shouldn’t be. *1Cor 3:1-3* “*And I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*” Like Mere men. Spiritually weak.

Part Three: Correction

Pretty self-explanatory, that one. If we were a ship on the ocean it would be a course correction. From *1Cor 3:5-9* we see the correction to the Corinthians thinking. “*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, not he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.*”

Lastly Part Four: Instruction in righteousness

This is with the idea of repetition doing what is right over and over, until we get it right. For the Corinthians, Paul writes that Timothy would come to them to personally oversee their training. *1Cor 4:14-18* “*I do not write these things to shame you, but as beloved children I warn you. For thought you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ*

Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you. Imitate me. For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

Ok, you have had your exam. You understand where you are, and what you need. And just like Dr. Karen will end your examination with a prescription for you to take after you go home and back to work, so too does God have a prescription for you. Just as the medicines are designed to fight the infection or diseases and allow your body to recover its health, God’s Rx will give you the spiritual strength, health and well-being in your days here on earth. And just as we are instructed by our doctors to take all of our medicines, so we must continue with our spiritual prescription to the very end. No quitting half way through.

So what is the treatment we must follow? What is God’s prescription? Look with me here in *Proverbs 4:5* where its’ spelled out plainly: *“Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.”* Get wisdom! In *verse 7* *“Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore, get wisdom...”* That’s it. Get wisdom. Simple right?

If you’re anything like me, you’re saying to yourself “wisdom, right!... what’s that?” I looked at some of the examples of those in the Bible who are said to be wise, such as the wise man who built his house on the rock, and the five wise virgins who took along the extra oil for their lamps. It seemed to me that each one evaluated where they were and what they had, looked out ahead to where they wanted to end up and then did what was necessary to get to the goal. So, I came up with this definition for wisdom. “a plan of action to achieve a desired goal.” Or better yet, “A plan of action based on God’s Word, to achieve God’s purpose for my life.” But I think this is the most fitting for us in these last days. “A personal plan of action, based on God’s word, to achieve the saving of my soul, and secure an abundant entrance into the millennial Kingdom of Christ.”

Let’s read some from Proverbs 4. I want to share with you all some connections I’ve seen here with what we have been learning through John in recent weeks. Prov 4:5-13 *“Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love*

her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore, get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on you head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver you. Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have led you in right paths. When you walk your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble. Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life.”

With the purpose of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, lets look again at vs 9 *“She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.”*

And compare it with *1 Peter 5:4 “and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”*

And *Rev 3:11 “Behold I am coming quickly! Hold fast to what you have, that no one may take your crown.”*

Then to *Proverbs 4:12 “When you walk your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble.*

With 2 Peter 1:10-11 “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

We could also add *Isaiah 40:31 “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

Then to *Proverbs 4:13 “Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life.”*

With *Hebrews 10: 35-39 “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, and He*

who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

In reading through the first few chapters of Proverbs I noticed there are several things that go hand in hand with wisdom. They are instructions, knowledge, and understanding. These things are vital but by themselves are not enough. In my little definition of wisdom, a key element is “a plan of action.” That means doing something. Putting feet to our faith. It is our work, guided by knowledge, instruction and understanding. We see this in those familiar verses from *James 1: 21-22* “*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness then implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” It is the same idea that Paul writes in *1 Cor 13:1-3* “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging symbol. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestowal my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*” Love is the outworking of our faith. And wisdom is living what we believe.

So then, for each of us, God’s Rx is the same. Get wisdom. Let’s encourage one another daily in our race of faith to put into practice a plan of wisdom. And if we feel we’re lacking wisdom, we can recall *James 1:5* “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*”

And *Matthew 7:7* “*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*”

I’m praying today that I might have been some small bit of encouragement to you all. All of you who live-stream with us, please know that you are an encouragement to us also.

Let’s stand and close for today with a word of prayer.

Eph 1:16-19 “..do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.”