

MARANATHA MESSENGER

Weekly Newsletter of

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MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

27 January 2019

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am Sunday Chinese Worship Service: 7.30 pm

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415); Elder Peter Ong (HP : 9626 7045)

This article is written by my pastor-friend, Rev David Lim. He is the Director of Gospel Recording, Singapore. May God help us to understand the biblical view of divine healing.

Pastor Colin Wong

CAN CHRISTIAN SEEK MEDICAL HELP

Rev David Lim, sd

In December 2016, a fellow minister phoned me, I'd hear him sobbing at the other terminal; I asked him why, he told me not to question him. He urgently desired to visit me. I merely came back from a four-week ministry in California, USA, having jet lag and little sleep; even so, I threw off my work and hurried to fill him.

He was confused: his oncology confirmed he had cancer on his neck; he called for immediate treatment—either chemotherapy, radiation or surgical operation. If he delayed treatment, once the cancer exploded, they couldn't make out anything.

At one time he told his church leadership that he had cancer and needed surgery, some urged him to just claim healing; others said, going for surgery showed a lack of faith and displeased God; another urged him to buy her organic fruit juice—a certain remedy. He was in an absolutely fix: to go for surgery might offend God and his leaders; if he delayed his performance, he might perish.

I have no intention to offend anyone in my writing. Please accept me as the "small boy that said, 'The Emperor is naked.'" I came from Reformed and Brethren Tradition, and experienced God filling me with the Holy Spirit at a revival meeting at Church of Singapore.

To put the record straight: I strongly think that God "can" cure; only I didn't say God "will" cure. I accept been a devout student of the Bible for over 50 years—I hardly spent a day without study my Bible—and have never read God promised health and wealth to believers. But He promised that He will never leave us or abandon us. The continued existence of illness and poverty are mentioned in the Scriptures.

The call that God guaranteed healing has brought more misery to the sufferers, due to ignorance of the teaching of healing in the Bible. Often faith healers blame the afflicted for the lack of faith or sin against God, when their healing does not occur.

Every human being has diseases. Christians are not exempt either (I Cor. 15: 35) If you hold a tooth

decay, you wear glasses, you are balding, you got flu, and so on, you are sick. Suffering is really much the consequence of our fallen nature. But the promise of future resurrection can make us a fresh consistency.

I take a Doctorate dissertation about the tragedy of many who rejected medical treatment for cancer in favour of divine healing. As a result, the disease worsens and beyond treatment, they died. If they had only sought medical treatment in the former phase of cancer, their lives could have been sustained. Another example, I found a friend who had appendicitis. He declined to visit a doctor, following the instruction of David Yonggi Cho, insisted on divine healing. One day, the appendicitis caused life-threatening pain; he swooned at his construction work site. Colleague rushed him to the hospital. His surgeon and friend told him that if he had stayed a little longer, he would fail. Therefore, the surgeon took out his appendix.

In both OT and NT, medicines and physicians are also spotlighted.

Medicine was recommended for treatment of diseases.

Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poultice of figs" (2KI 20:7). They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered. Not only did Isaiah have spiritual news and instructions for Hezekiah, he also received directions for the king's physical recovery. In accordance with those orders, a poultice of figs was mixed and applied to Hezekiah's ulcerated sore, and he recovered. Although God chose to solve through the accepted medical standards of the day, it is certain that ultimately the healing was effected by the divine word.

Another example is seen in Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?" Balm referred to is the resin or gum of the storax tree, which was used medicinally.

Timothy had frequent illnesses. "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses" (1TI 5:23). Obviously, the wine was used for medicinal purposes, Timothy is told not to confine himself to drinking water but to "use a little wine because of your belly and your frequent illnesses." The word for wine (GK G3885) is sometimes employed in the LXX for unfermented grape juice. (Here I am not promoting drinking wine.) I desire to prove you that Timothy received a long-term stomach problem, and wine was recommended as a treatment—I presuppose Dr Luke, Paul's personal physician, recommended it.

TV evangelists in healing meetings often wear glasses, and demonstrate evidence of using modern dentures, to suppose naught of their resorting to drugstore remedies on occasion. However they will quote "Healed all your diseases."

Paul's faithful co-worker, Trophimus almost died. "Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus" (2TI 4:20). Paul prayed for the sick, still he could do nothing for Trophimus.

We also note that the physician was mentioned in the NT. (Matt. 9: 12; Mk 2: 17; Col. 4: 4)

Jesus spoke about doctors. Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Matt. 9: 12; Mk 2: 17; Lk 5: 31). If divine healing is a norm, then Jesus could have dismissed all doctors. Apostle Paul called Luke his beloved physician (Col. 4: 14).

Jesus also didn't heal everyone. As an example of healing at the pool of Bethesda (John 5: 1-15). There were lots patients but Jesus only heal one man. Can anybody tell me the possible reason?

Often, ministers, preachers, Faith Healers would suggest that either sufferer lacks faith or sins against God, when healing does not happen. With these remarks, they avoid responsibility. Have me show

them wrong.

No all sicknesses are caused by sin

While the Bible does teach that some Christians are sick as a result of sin (see 1 Cor. 11: 29, 30), Jesus made it clear that this is not always the case.

He healed the man who was born blind. "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." Christ said that this man was not born blind due to his own sin, nor due to his parents. Rather, his blindness was a sovereign act to expose the work of God in his spirit.

Job was sick in spite of his righteousness (Job 1: 8). " So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head" (Job 2: 8).

Epaphroditus was sick because of his untiring activity of the Lord's work Phil. 2: 30

Faith is essential, but the want of faith does not affect healing.

True, in certain instance healing appeared to be in response to faith. This is by no means always the case. And even where faith was present, there is still no proof that healing might not have taken place in any event, without the religion.

Jesus healed or so even when there seemed to be protesting against it (Matt. 8: 28, 29; Mark 1: 23- 26). In one instance, the high priest's servant who apparently was an unbeliever and the foe of Jesus was brought around, when he attached his ear (Luke 22: 51).

In John 11: 1 -43. Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead. How could a dead man have faith? Both Mary and Martha didn't have faith either, but Jesus still raises Lazarus.

On many occasions, healing was brought about where it is evident that there was no faith, or in spite of the lack of faith. Some who were cured by Jesus did not recognize who He was when the healing took place. John 9 gives the story of the healing of the man born blind. After his recovery, his lack of faith in the Saviour is shown by his saying that he *did not know* whether the One opening his eyes was a sinner or not (v. 25). Subsequently, when Jesus found him and called for him, if he believed on the Son of God, he enquired who that was (vv. 35, 36).

Another example of healing without faith at the pool of Bethesda (John 5: 1-15). In verse 7, after Jesus had talked to him, the cripple expressed no hope of being cured, but despair. And so, after being healed, when he was asked who had been responsible for it, he alleged he did not know who had cured him (v. 13).

In one case, one who obviously was an unbeliever and the foe of Jesus was healed (the high priest's servant, Luke 22: 51).

Similarly, as will be seen in James 5, it is the faith of those who pray over the sick on which is effectual, not the faith of the suffering individuals.

"How tragic, in the light of the full truth, how cruel to tell some deeply afflicted person that, his healing is not forthcoming of had failed because he did not have the proper faith. And how unlike anything we find in the Scripture." Samuel Fish

"We must avoid an ancient danger that has reasserted itself in our technological society: magic. Magic is trying to manipulate natural or supernatural powers to serve our purposes. The self stands at the

centre of the universe, not God. Modern technologists are the successors to pagan magicians. The magical attitude exists among technologically minded Christians as well. If you have faith, they say, anything you ask in prayer will be yours. Prayer is a technique for twisting God's arm to get what they want. Such prayers are an abuse of relationship (with God). And to abuse a friendship is to lose it." [Dr. Simon Chan, Spiritual Theology, page 131]

A doctor can remove the malignant tissues from our body. He treats, but ultimately it is the provision of God that our body heals by itself. Our body constantly produces cancer cells, but it is normally destroyed by its immune system. Its immune system fights against all kinds of viruses. When a doctor prescribed medicine for our sickness or set a broken bone in its place, he facilitates the healing, but he does not heal. The body will heal itself.

An often-misquoted text used to claim divine healing:

1Pe 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

This verse is often misquoted to claim divine healing. By whose stripes you were healed applied to atone to the soul. It appears to have no reference to bodily healing or physical needs. The Bible writers frequently use sickness in a figurative or symbolic manner to represent sin, disobedience, rebellion and moral consequences thereof. Contrary to the teaching of faith healers, it is common knowledge that the Hebrew word *raphah* often refers to spiritual rather than physical healing. For example, Jer 3:22, "Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings." "Indeed we do come to You, For You are the LORD our God." Jeremiah is obviously not referring to physical healing.

Divine Healing and miracles are not nominative in the Bible 1 Kings 13: 4; 2 Timothy 4: 20

In John 5: 1-15, lots of sick people were gathered at the pool of Bethesda, waiting for the angel to stir the water, so they could dive in to receive healing. Jesus only healed the man lying in bed for 38 years.

God often didn't heal all His saints. For instance, the Prophet Elisha died of a sickness. Are you surprised? He had performed various miracles, and yet he died of an unknown illness. "Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" (2KI 13:14).

Even, when one is healed of a disease, you can be sure other diseases will develop later. A sad reality that some faith healer themselves died of sickness. Look at the examples below:

The Founder of the Word of Faith movement, Kenneth Hagin said: It is not God's will for any to be sick (Healing the fathers Provision, p.9) I believe that it is the plan of our father that no believer should be sick that every believer should live his life to full time and actually wear out if Jesus tarries then fall asleep in Jesus. I state boldly that it is not the will of God my father that we should suffer with cancer and other dread disease and reap pain and anguish. No, it's God's will that we should be healed." While Hagin said he has had no headaches, he had 4 major cardiovascular failures. But this is one of those incidents he's not telling you (Christianity in Crises, pp. 237-238; a Different Gospel by D.L McConnell) Hagin suffered four separate episodes of heart-crisis in 1939, 1942, 1949, and 1973.

Kathryn Kuhlman died of heart failure in 1976, curiously enough. She had battled heart disease for nearly twenty years, and that statement is made by Jamie Buckingham, who would have been one of her disciples.

Another comes to mind, Ruth Carter Stapleton, was the Faith Healing sister of former United States President Jimmie Carter. [She] refused medical treatment for cancer because of her belief in faith healing. She died of the disease in 1983.

And even John Wimber, who would be probably the most prominent modern contemporary Third Wave healer, struggles with chronic angina and heart problems. Wimber writes, "I wish I could write that at this time I am completely healed, that I no longer have physical problems, but if I did it would not be true." Now, it seems obvious, at least a curiosity to all of us, that so many leading advocates of faith healing are sick!

Even Joyce Meyers honestly admitted she had breast cancer, and was medically treated. One of the few honest admissions.

While it can be argued that Christ's atonement upon the cross extends to redeeming the physical realm (Romans 8), we will continue to suffer the effects of the fall (such as sickness and disease) until God establishes a new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

The Prince of Preacher, Charles Spurgent, had endured chronic depression, daily till he died. Unlike me, during my depression (in 2010-2011) I took antidepressants. But he had no chance.

"Presumptuous Christian writers [Faith Healers] claim to know God's intent, such as the author of the book that insists, "God wants you well." Who says so? Why should He want you well when He did not want the apostles Paul well? Paul apparently had a serious eye disease to which he refers in his letters to the young churches. And indeed, Paul asked God to remove his thorn in the flesh several times. But God chose not to do so. Timothy, Paul's protégé, had something in the way of gastrointestinal complain. Paul did not respond with the command "Be healed!" Instead, he told Timothy to stop drinking only water and drink a little wine.

'Affliction is part of the Christian's life just as much as the nonbeliever's (sometimes more so). The proper response of Christians to affliction is not to demand healing but rather to witness to the world that through the grace of God a Christian is able to accept affliction, trusting in the sovereignty of God. We are called to witness to the sovereignty, grace, and mercy of God in time, knowing that all of these things will be removed in eternity." Agony of deceit, page 175.

Whatever means, our dependence must always be with Him, Who heals through the chosen means. Healing is God's compassion and gracious provision. And not something we can demand from Him. I believe prayer and medication must go hand in hand. In Phil 2: 27 healing is spoken as the mercy of God, not something we can demand from him. God can and does heal. In every sense, all healing is divine. A Christian surgeon said, "Doctors bind the wound; God does the healing."

In the sovereignty of God, some may be healed while others remain sick. We rejoice with those who are cured. For those who are still afflicted, a reminder that God may be using our disease to shape our character and to prove His power in our weakness (2 Cor. 12: 7-9). The way we endure affliction may be a testimony of the grace and power of God.

Resource:

Fisk, Samuel. Divine Healing Under the Searchlight, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, P.O. Box 95500 Schaumburg, 1978.

Horton, Horton, Editor. The Agony of Deceit, South Africa, Christian Art Publishers, P.O. Box 1599, 1990.

Hanegraff, Hank. Christianity in Crisis, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, 1993.

Wiersbe, Warren W. The Bible Expository Commentary Volume 1, Victor Books, Wheaton: Illinois 60187, 1989.

Brand, Paul. A Surgeon's View of Divine Healing, ChristianityToday Magazine, November 19, 2007

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Theme for the Quarter :

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

English Worship Service :

Rev Colin Wong

speaks on

The Holy Spirit Convicting

(Scripture Text : John 16:5-11; Responsive Reading : Psalm 51).

[*End of MM*]